



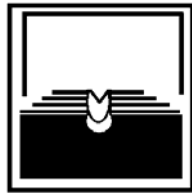
The Minaret

An online Islamic magazine
www.iosminaret.org

Vol. 1, No. 1 (March 2007)

Editors

Dr Mohammed Manzoor Alam
Professor A. R. Momin



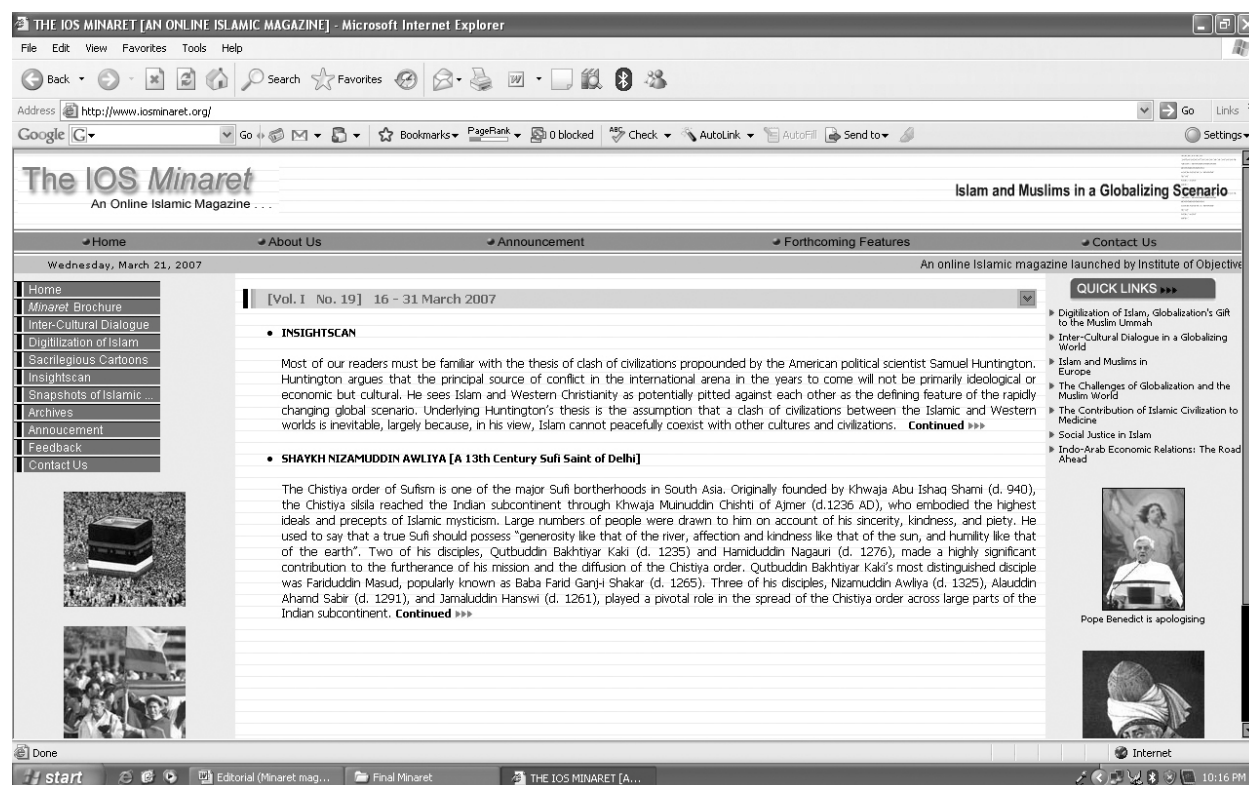
Institute of Objective Studies

Institute Building, 162, Jogabai Main Road
Jamia Nagar, New Delhi-110025
Tel.: 91-11-26981187, 26989253, 26987467 Fax: 91-11-26981104
Email: manzoor@ndf.vsnl.net.in Website: www.iosminaret.org

Editorial

Modern information and communication technologies offer a unique opportunity for the dissemination of information and ideas on an incredibly large scale. A number of Islamic websites have surfaced in recent years, which aim at providing a wide range of information related to Islam and Muslims. An over-view of such websites and their significance in the global context is provided in “Digitization of Islam: Globalisation’s Gift to the Muslim *Ummah*”, featured in the inaugural issue of The IOS Minaret in May, 2006.

The IOS Minaret was launched as an online Islamic magazine in May 2006. The aims and objectives of the website are set out in the Introduction. The IOS Minaret is inspired by the verse of the Holy Quran: “Lo! Allah does not change the condition of a people until they (first) change what is in themselves.” It is motivated by the conviction that Muslims need to build effective and sustainable networks of fortifications—intellectual, moral and cultural—in order to deal with the formidable challenges they are faced with.



The IOS Minaret is unique in certain respects. First, it seeks to focus on the enduring significance and relevance of Islamic ideas and principles in the contemporary global context and in terms of the current academic idiom and vocabulary. The features in the website are presented not in an abstruse, jargon-laden manner but in a lucid, readable style. Second, the website offers perceptive, insightful comments and analyses of current events, trends and issues. These comments and analyses are basically informed by an Islamic perspective and reflect an inter-disciplinary approach. Third, The IOS Minaret features, from time to time,

in-depth, critical reviews of recently published books dealing with global issues, world religions, Islam and Muslims, and inter-cultural dialogue.

The IOS Minaret is committed to carry on with its mission, in the months and years ahead, by presenting a wide range of interesting and unique features, including the following:

- Virtual Museum of Islamic Art and Culture
- Great Cities of the Islamic World
- Profiles of Muslim Countries
- Institutions of Islamic Learning in the World
- A History of Islamic Ideas
- Islam and the Making of Civilization
- Islamic Movements and Organisations in the World
- Minarets of Learning and Wisdom (Profiles of prominent Muslim scholars and sages)
- A Window on Islam's Intellectual Legacy (Introductory essays on classical Islamic literature)

The Internet culture is yet to take root in India and in other countries of the Third World, where the printed word is favoured over the virtual world. The Institute of Objective Studies is pleased to present the print edition of The IOS Minaret, which is aimed at reaching out to a wider readership. The contents of this biennial Minaret magazine have been taken from the website. We look forward to the support and cooperation of well-wishers, readers, contributors, subscribers and advertisers in this labour of love.

We would like to express our appreciation of the services of Mr. Ataur Rahman, Mr. Mansoor Ahmad and Mr. Md. Afroz for looking after the organizational and technical side of The IOS Minaret with efficiency and dedication.

Dr. Mohammad Manzoor Alam

Professor A. R. Momin

Editors

CONTENTS

Editorial

Introduction

1.	The Challenges of Globalization and the Muslim World	<i>Professor A. R. Momin</i>	13-31
2.	Inter-Cultural Dialogue in a Globalizing World	<i>IOS Research Network</i>	32-48
3.	Islam and Social Justice	<i>IOS Research Network</i>	49-56
4.	GLOBESCAN Comments on current events, trends, issues	<i>Professor A. R. Momin</i>	57-72
5.	Indo-Arab Economic Relations: The Road Ahead	<i>Dr. M. A. Hasib</i>	73-76
6.	DIGITIZATION OF ISLAM Globalization's Gift to the Muslim Ummah	<i>Professor A. R. Momin</i>	77-84
7.	'Don't touch my headscarf.'	<i>IOS Research Network</i>	85-90
8.	SNAPSHOTS OF ISLAMIC LEGACY	<i>Professor A. R. Momin</i>	91-94
9.	MULTICULTURALISM ON TRIAL The exclusion of Muslims and the construction of national identity in Spain		95-102
10.	JESUS, THE SON OF MARY	<i>Professor A. R. Momin</i>	103-112
11.	Pope Benedict XVI and Islamophobia	<i>IOS Research Network</i>	113-128
12.	SACRILEGIOUS CARTOONS <i>Is it justifiable to offend people's sensitivities in the name of freedom of expression?</i>	<i>IOS Research Network</i>	129-134

- | | | | |
|-----|---|------------------------------|---------|
| 13. | Islam and Pluralism | <i>Professor A.R. Momin</i> | 135-142 |
| 14. | Islam and the Making of Indian Civilization | <i>Professor A. R. Momin</i> | 143-160 |
| 15. | Mawlana Rum on Human Nature | <i>Professor A.R. Momin</i> | 161-166 |

Introduction

Institute of Objective Studies

The Institute of Objective Studies was established as a non-profit, non-political academic organization in Delhi (India) in 1986. The broad objectives of the Institute include the promotion of conceptual, multi-disciplinary and empirical studies on Islamic civilization and on Indian Muslims as well as other religious traditions and communities in the country, and of analytical studies on issues and challenges faced by Muslims in particular and by Indian society and humanity in general. One of the main concerns of the Institute is to foster an academic and cultural environment of goodwill, accommodation and dialogue between Muslims and the followers of other religious traditions. In furtherance of these objectives, the Institute regularly organizes national and international seminars and conferences, publishes books and journals, sponsors socio-economic surveys and other research projects, and offers scholarships to meritorious and deserving students.

During the past two decades, the Institute has sought to broaden its base by opening and facilitating channels of communication and interaction between Muslim academics, the *ulama*, and activists, by developing linkages and networks with NGOs engaged in development and welfare projects, and by initiating academic exchanges and collaboration with eminent scholars as well as academic organizations and research institutes in different countries. A recent outcome of this collaborative effort is the publication of a volume *100 Great Muslim Leaders of the 20th Century* (2006).

The Institute has six regional Chapters, which are located in the cities of Chennai, Aligarh, Patna, Calicut, Kolkata and Ahmedabad. In recognition of its multi-faced contributions, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations has conferred on the Institute a consultative status (Roster).

THE IOS *MINARET*

The dawn of the 21st century has brought in its wake formidable challenges as well unforeseen prospects for humanity. Globalization is accelerating apace and is poised to radically alter the world scenario in the foreseeable future. The process of globalization seems to be a paradoxical phenomenon, a mixed bag of positive and negative elements and features. Thus, on the one hand, it has brought about a good measure of exposure and sensitivity towards ethnic, religious and cultural diversities, thanks to modern information and communication technologies, large-scale international migrations, and intermingling among people from varied ethnic and religious backgrounds. On the other hand, modern information and communication technologies have also been used for disseminating and reinforcing stereotypes and prejudices about different ethnic groups and religious communities. The 2004 annual report of the Vienna-based European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia points out that, notwithstanding the high-sounding rhetoric of human rights, ethnic and religious minorities in many European countries—especially

Muslims and Gypsies—have to bear the brunt of xenophobia, institutionalized racism and exclusion.

A relatively recent phenomenon which has attracted world-wide attention, especially in the aftermath of 9/11, is what has come to be known as Islamophobia: fear of and hostility towards Islam and Muslims. The currently prevailing perception about Islam in the Western world is that it is at variance with progress and enlightenment, that it incites violent passions in its followers, that it poses an ominous threat to world peace. Shortly after 9/11, Nobel Laureate V. S. Naipaul asserted that Islam has always attempted to enslave and wipe out other cultures and that it has had calamitous effects on converted peoples. Samuel Huntington, whose book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996) created a storm of controversy, described the contemporary period as the “age of Muslim wars” in which Muslims are fighting each other and non-Muslims alike. Writing in *Newsweek* (17 December 2001), Huntington argued that these wars (allegedly initiated by Muslims) have replaced the Cold War as the principal form of international conflict and that they could congeal into one major clash of civilizations between Islam and the West or between Islam and the Rest. He sees Western Christianity and Islam as potentially pitted against each other in the unfolding global scenario. Francis Fukuyama, who authored the notorious “end of history” thesis, argued in the same issue of the magazine that the gravest threat to Western liberal democracy is posed by what he describes as “Islamofascism”. A British historian Niall Ferguson has recently said that even if the Muslims in Europe are the citizens of the countries where they live, they cannot be true citizens. Misconceptions about Islam and mistrust towards Muslims exist, in varying degrees, in large parts of the world today.

It is heartening to note that such extreme and distorted views have not gone unchallenged. The hollowness of Huntington’s clash of civilizations thesis has been exposed by some of the world’s leading thinkers and intellectuals. Edward Said, for example, decried the clash of civilizations thesis as a deplorable attempt to revive the old good vs. evil dichotomy prevalent during the Cold War era. Huntington’s views, fallacious and distorted as they are, have been publicly denounced by heads of states, including President Bill Clinton, statesmen and politicians in many Western countries. The massive anti-war protests and demonstrations across Europe, North America and the rest of the world before the American-led invasion of Iraq and the sharp differences between the major European countries and the US and its allies before and after the invasion exposed the absurdity of the thesis.

The events that unfolded in the wake of 9/11 brought about a radical transformation of the global scenario. A curious fall-out of 9/11 was a surge of popular as well as academic interest, especially in the United States and Europe, in understanding Islamic beliefs and values. Large numbers of Muslims, especially those living in the Western world, felt the need to fall back upon their spiritual and cultural heritage and to reinvent their identity. One can scarcely fail to notice the tidal wave of Islamic resurgence which is sweeping across the Islamic world as well as South Asia, Europe, North America and Australia where Muslims have a sizeable presence. This is reflected in the growing demand for Islamic literature, in the proliferation of religious and communitarian institutions and organizations, in the revitalization of Islamic movements, and in the growing involvement of Muslim youth as well as Muslim women in faith-based activities.

The IOS *Minaret* has been conceived in the context of the unfolding global scenario. The broad objectives of the website are the following.

- (1) To present the values, ideals and principles of Islam in a rational, non-polemical and cogent manner and in the contemporary idiom.
- (2) To highlight the seminal and multi-faceted contribution of Islam and Muslims to the development and enrichment of human civilization as a whole as well as in specific regional contexts in the areas of advancement of knowledge and learning, human rights, science and medicine, engineering and technology, social sciences and humanities, art and architecture, town planning, governance and administration.
- (3) To provide authentic, updated information about Muslim communities located in different parts of the world.
- (4) To examine and analyze contemporary issues from an Islamic perspective.
- (5) To clear misconceptions, misrepresentations and misgivings about Islam and Muslims.
- (6) To clear the cobweb of confusion, ambivalence and scepticism in the minds of certain sections of Western-educated Muslims, students and youth and to instill in them a sense of legitimate pride in their religious and cultural heritage.
- (7) To act as a catalyst in motivating educated Muslims to play a positive and constructive role in society in the light of Islamic values.
- (8) To build bridges of tolerance, goodwill and dialogue between Muslims and the rest of humanity in particular and between civilizations, cultures and communities in general.

The IOS *Minaret* covers a wide range of themes and subjects, including the Holy Quran, Hadith and Islamic law; history of Islamic civilization in the global as well as regional contexts; contribution of Muslims to the advancement of knowledge, science and medicine, social sciences and historiography, literature and the humanities, engineering and technology, architecture, arts and crafts; unity and diversity in contemporary Muslim societies; the status and role of women in Islam and in present-day Muslim societies; Muslim minorities; the historical significance and role of Islamic endowments; Islamic movements; Islamic financial institutions; profiles of eminent Muslims; prominent institutions of Islamic learning; centres of Islamic heritage; problems and challenges facing the Muslim *ummah*, etc. The discussion of these themes will be informed by a multi-disciplinary approach, shorn of pedantry and contestation.

The IOS *Minaret* has an interactive format, which will hopefully motivate scholars, researchers, writers, media persons and other experts, professionals, students and educated Muslims to come to grips with the concerns and challenges facing the global Muslim

community. Readers and browsers are welcome to send their queries and comments on our write-ups and we can assure them of our prompt response.

The Institute has decided to bring out a print edition of The IOS Minaret twice a year. We are happy to present the first issue of The Minaret.

Dr. Mohammad Manzoor Alam

Chairman

Professor A. R. Momin

Academic Director

THE IOS *MINARET*

Forthcoming features

- Invitation to the Holy Quran
- The Challenges of Globalization and the Islamic World
- Contribution of Muslims to the Medical Sciences
- Islamic International Law
- The Contribution of Al-Zahrawi to Surgery
- The Legacy of Islam: Endowments
- Islam and Human Rights
- Islamic Contribution to Historiography
- Non-Muslims in the Islamic State
- Islamic Finance and Banking
- Islam and the Environmental Crisis
- Islam and the Making of Civilization
- Contribution of Muslims to Geography
- Human Development in the Islamic World
- Islam and Multiculturalism
- Being a European Muslim (Dr Tariq Ramadan): Review Essay
- Ibn Khaldun: The Founder of Sociology
- Women's Rights in Islam
- Islam the Alternative (Murad Hofmann): Review Essay
- Human Nature in Islamic Perspective
- Contribution of Muslims to Architecture
- Islam and the Making of Indian Civilization
- Islam in China
- Living Heritage: Al-Azhar University
- Living Heritage: *Museo Vivo de Al-Andalus*
- Islamic Law and Muslim Minorities
- Civic Activism in the Islamic World
- Islam's Democratic Essence
- Islam's Intellectual Legacy: The Contribution of Fuat Sezgin
- Sociology in Islamic Perspective
- Social Science Methodology: An Islamic Perspective
- Al-Biruni: The Father of Anthropology
- Islam and Modernity
- Transnational Islamic Movements: The Tablighi Jama'at
- Islamic Resurgence in Central Asia
- Women's Religious Seminaries in Iran
- Women's Madrasas in India

- Journey to Islam: Extracts from Murad Hofmann's Autobiography
- Contribution of Muslims to Political Science
- Islam in Southeast Asia

The Challenges of Globalization and the Muslim World

Professor A. R. Momin

Globalization involves a whole set of processes, including the increasing integration of the world economy, the growing interconnectedness and interdependence of societies around the world, and extensive and unprecedented movement of capital, goods and services, technology, people, lifestyles and cultural patterns. Modern information and communication technologies are the driving force of globalization. In earlier times, the economies of most countries were dominated by agriculture or industry. In contrast, the global economy is defined in terms of processes that are largely intangible and 'weightless'. This weightless economy is a product of modern information and communication technologies—computer software, Internet-based services, media and entertainment products. In other words, the global economy is essentially knowledge economy. Manuel Castels, in his influential books *The Rise of Network Society* (1996) and *The End of Millennium* (1998), points out that the global system is in essence a network society made up of extensive linkages between production, power and experience. These linkages, according to him, construct a 'culture of virtuality' in the global flows which transcend time and space.

Globalization is not an entirely new phenomenon. In earlier times, empires, conquests, religions, movements and migrations involving large numbers of people had a global or near-global reach. Christianity, Buddhism and Islam have been global religions for centuries. The globalization of Christianity began under the aegis of the Roman Empire with the conversion of the Emperor Constantine I to Christianity in 313 A.D. The globalization of Islam, on the other hand, did not commence under the auspices of any empire. It was set in motion by the inherently universalist message of the Islamic faith which attracted hundreds of thousands of people from diverse ethnic backgrounds and from different regions of the world, by the dispersal of Muslims across large parts of the world and, subsequently, by the creation of transnational institutions of science and learning. For the first time in history, the globalization of science, medicine and philosophy took place under the auspices of Islamic civilization during the medieval period. It was marked by extensive translations of scientific and philosophical works from Greece, India, Persia and Egypt, by a creative synthesis of the researches of Muslim scientists with those of other lands, by the establishment of scientific institutions (such as observatories, scientific academies, medical colleges, libraries, hospitals),

For the first time in history, the globalization of science, medicine and philosophy took place under the auspices of Islamic civilization during the medieval period. It was marked by extensive translations of scientific and philosophical works from Greece, India, Persia and Egypt, by a creative synthesis of the researches of Muslim scientists with those of other lands, by the establishment of scientific institutions (such as observatories, scientific academies, medical colleges, libraries, hospitals), by the employment of Arabic as the universal lingua franca of scientific communication, and by the creation of a community of scientists, philosophers and translators from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds.

by the employment of Arabic as the universal lingua franca of scientific communication, and by the creation of a community of scientists, philosophers and translators from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds.

It must, however, be acknowledged that the scale, magnitude and reach of the processes subsumed under globalization, particularly the incredible acceleration in the rate of change, are truly unprecedented in the annals of human history. A great deal of hype and euphoria surrounds the process of globalization. Mercifully, the euphoria is now slowly dissipating, giving way to a more realistic and balanced assessment of the pros and cons of globalization.

A balance sheet of globalization

There is no denying that, whether one likes it or not, globalization is here to stay and is in fact poised to gather further momentum in the years to come. At the same time, there is a growing realization that globalization is a paradoxical phenomenon, a mixed bag of the good and the bad. Anthony Giddens, one of the most celebrated sociologists of today, points out that globalization is not a single process but a complex mixture of processes, which often act in contradictory ways, producing conflicts, disjunctions and new forms of inequality. Consequently, globalization is being perceived and experienced differently by different people in different parts of the world. Therefore, in order to assess the benefits, prospects and challenges of globalization it is necessary to contextualize it to specific groups, communities and regions.

Globalization has opened vast and hitherto unforeseen opportunities for millions of people around the world in terms of new technologies, economic growth, better job prospects and occupational mobility, increased trade and commerce, and foreign investments.

Modern information and communication technologies have made an incredibly vast range of information open and accessible to all and sundry, with positive consequences for efficiency, productivity and competitiveness. Technological innovations (which are now globally



Protest against globalization in Ecuador

accessible) have greatly facilitated a far more efficient harnessing of natural resources, such as oil, natural gas and hydraulic and mineral resources. The global sourcing of goods—fruits, vegetables, meat, sea food, consumer items—through large retailing outlets (such as Wal-Mart) provides incredibly large, global markets for an enormous variety of local products, with substantial benefits to large numbers of consumers and farmers. Global processes, such as the reduction of tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade, have greatly facilitated the global flow of goods and services and have a positive effect on competitiveness. Online trading sites, such as e-Bay, provide not only information and access to a wide range of products from across the world but also an outlet for the sale of traditional handicrafts from different regions of the world. One of the most remarkable achievements of globalization is the increasing worldwide network of medical consultations and the global diffusion of medical technology.

While the benefits of globalization are evident and undeniable, one should not lose sight of its dark side. The most scathing critique of globalization is that it has brought about wide and glaring asymmetries of power, resources and opportunities in large parts of the world. Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen has remarked that “even though the world is incomparably richer than ever before, ours is also a world of extraordinary deprivation and staggering inequality.” Much of the world—most regions of Africa and Latin America, Russia, nearly all of the Middle East (except Israel), large parts of Asia—has been left out of the process of globalization. The richest 10% of the world (living in Western countries and in Japan) consume 58% of the world’s total energy, 84% of all paper, 45% of all meat and fish, and own 87% of all vehicles. Nearly 80% of the world stock of foreign direct investment is located in the industrialized countries of the North. The bulk of global trade occurs within three regions, namely Europe, North America and Asia-Pacific. The 1999 *Human Development Report* revealed that the average income of the fifth of the world’s population living in the richest countries was 74 times greater than the average income of the fifth living in the poorest countries. In the late 1990s, 20% of the world’s population living in the industrialized countries accounted for 86% of the world’s overall consumption, 82% of export markets, 74% of all telephone lines, and 97% of all patents worldwide. The digital divide—the technological gap between the North and the South—is too glaring. Nearly 80% of the world’s population living in the poorer countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America still lacks access to the most basic communication technologies. In sub-Saharan Africa less than one per cent of households have a landline phone. There are more telephone lines in Manhattan than in the whole of sub-Saharan Africa. In the industrialized countries one person out of three owns a computer as compared to one out of 130 in Africa. The information superhighway seems to have passed by most of the world’s population.

The richest 10% of the world (living in Western countries and in Japan) consume 58% of the world’s total energy, 84% of all paper, 45% of all meat and fish, and own 87% of all vehicles. Nearly 80% of the world stock of foreign direct investment is located in the industrialized countries of the North. The bulk of global trade occurs within three regions, namely Europe, North America and Asia-Pacific.

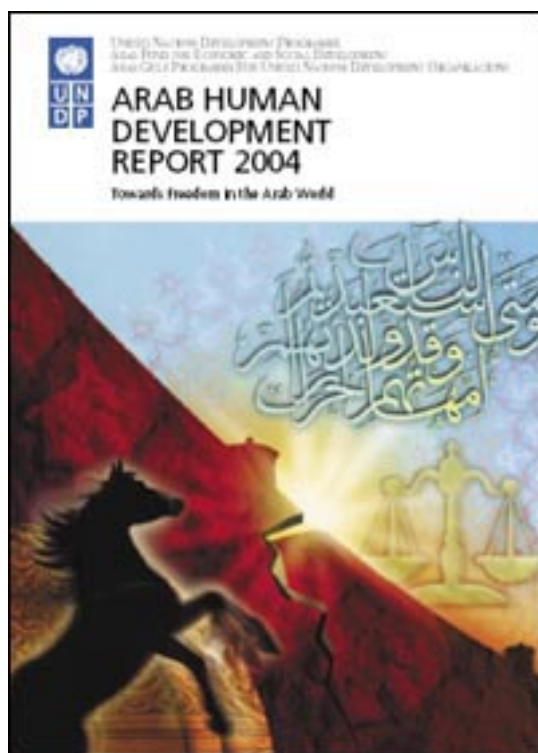
One of the paradoxical features of globalization is the contradiction between inclusion and exclusion. While some countries have reaped a rich harvest of globalization, others have been marginalized and excluded. All the international agencies—such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organization—are dominated by the world's richest nations, particularly the United States.

Nineteen of the forty two African states that are members of the WTO have little or no representation at its headquarters in Geneva. In many countries of Africa and Asia real incomes are falling, with disturbing consequences for people's health, life expectancy and education. The World Bank Report 2000 says that there is a danger that many of the developing countries most in need of economic growth will be left even further behind as globalization progresses.

The disjunction between the global and the local is becoming increasingly evident. What appears rational at the global level—such as the various international trade agreements related to natural resources, biodiversity and intellectual property rights—can have devastating consequences for the environment, indigenous resources and local communities. This is reflected in the massive protests against globalization by ethnic minorities in Philippines, indigenous communities in Ecuador, peasants in Burkina Faso, Indian fisherfolk and environmental activists in the United States and other countries.

The challenges of globalization and the Muslim world

On the whole, there is an unfortunate absence in the Muslim world of a realistic and critical



reflection on the global scenario, the prospects and opportunities afforded by it, and the challenges faced by the Muslim community. By and large, the perception and response of the Muslim world to the challenges of globalization seems to be foggy, confused and out of focus. In my view, the challenges of globalization in respect of the Muslim world cover the following seven areas: (1) the knowledge deficit (2) the economic and technological wilderness (3) human rights (4) global culture and secularization (5) Islamophobia (6) Muslim diaporas (7) the dependency syndrome.

The knowledge deficit

The pursuit of knowledge occupies a central place in Islam. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) declared that the acquisition of knowledge is an obligation on every Muslim. He exhorted his followers to carry the torch of knowledge and learning far and wide.

Islam opened the portals of knowledge to all and sundry, men and women, rich and poor, king and slave. This refreshingly open, dynamic and egalitarian approach brought about revolutionary consequences for not only Muslims but human civilization as a whole.

One of the gravest ailments affecting large sections of Muslims is the abysmally low level of literacy and their endemic indifference to education. Almost two-thirds of Muslims in the world today are illiterate, far below world average. Nearly three-fourths of Muslim women across the world can neither read nor write. *The Arab Human Development Report 2002* identified three major deficits in the Arab world today: knowledge, freedom and women's rights. The report reveals that illiteracy rates in the Arab world are still higher than the international average and even higher than the average in the developing countries.

The education of females has a particularly significant bearing on nutrition, healthcare and hygiene. It greatly improves the family's ability to manage basic child care, increase the nutritional content of diet, ensure a more effective diagnosis of disease, and improve elementary healthcare. Several studies suggest that the education of females is positively correlated with a significant increase in immunization and child mortality rates. It has been estimated that mothers who have completed primary school have 20% less malnutrition in their children than illiterate mothers.

It is now universally recognized that education is the key to human development, progress and global competitiveness. No people or country can hope to reap the harvest of globalization without making a heavy investment in human development, especially education. Unfortunately, the Muslim and Arab world lags far behind in this crucial area. The Second *Arab Human Development Report 2003* concludes that the status of knowledge in the Arab world in terms of demand, production and dissemination is grossly inadequate and ineffectual. The Third *Arab Human Development Report 2004* points out that scientific research in Arab countries is seriously hampered by weak basic research and the almost total absence of advanced research in fields such as information technology and molecular biology. Arab countries, according to the report, have one of the lowest levels of research funding in the world. Investment in research and development in Arab countries is less than one-seventh of the world average. The average number of scientists and engineers working in research and development in Arab countries is 371 per million people, while the world average, including countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, is 979.

The Third *Arab Human Development Report 2003* points out that in the 1000 years since the reign of the caliph Mamoun, the Arabs have translated as many books as Spain translates in one year. The Arab world translates about 330 books annually, one-fifth of the number that Greece translates. The economic and technological wilderness.

The number of books published in the Arab world does not exceed 1.1 per cent of world production. The number of books translated from foreign languages into Arabic is negligible. The Third *Arab Human Development Report 2003* points out that in the 1000 years since the reign of the caliph Mamoun, the Arabs have translated as many books as Spain translates in one year. The Arab world translates about 330 books annually, one-fifth of the number that Greece translates. In 1990, thousands of scientific conferences were held in different parts of the world, where two and a half million papers were presented. The papers presented by Muslim scholars numbered only one thousand.

The economic and social scenario in most Muslim countries is defined by low or stagnant growth, low productivity, wide income disparities, wasteful military expenditure, injudicious management of resources, heavy burden of debts, escalating unemployment rates, rising inflation, and inefficient and insensitive administration.

The GDP of all Arab states combined stood at \$531.2 billion in 1999, less than that of a single middle-size European country, Spain (\$595.5 billion). There is no dearth of resources in the Muslim world. There are 18 major oil-producing countries in the world, of which 10 are Muslim, which produce nearly 40% of the world's oil. Much of the oil revenue goes into the personal accounts of the ruling elite or in defence expenditure, including the purchase of military hardware, the maintenance of foreign troops stationed in some Muslim countries, and the professional services provided by foreign military personnel. The 1994 *Human Development Report* pointed out that the top five arms-exporting countries, who are also the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, are together responsible for 86% of all conventional weapons exported. Muslim countries are among the biggest clients of arms-exporting countries. They spend, on an average, 10% to 30% of their GDP on defence. Ironically, after World War II there has been no major armed conflict between Muslim countries and the Western world. On the other hand, Muslim countries have fought several wars among themselves, which led to the killing of 1.5 million Muslims and injury to thousands. It is estimated that the foreign debts of Muslim countries account for over thirty per cent of the world's debts.

There are 22 Arab states with 280 million people, who constitute about 5% of the global population. The *Arab Human Development Report 2002* revealed that one in five Arabs—20% of the population—still lives on less than \$2 a day. Nearly 15% of the labour force is unemployed. According to an International Labour Organization study, of the 88 million unemployed males between 15 and 24 years worldwide, almost 26% are in the Middle East and North Africa (quoted by Thomas Friedman: *The World is Flat*, 2005, p.198).

Muslims constitute nearly 20% of the world's population, but Muslim countries account for only 4% of world trade. The share of Muslim countries in foreign direct investment (FDI) is negligible. None of the Arab countries, for example, figures among the top ten FDI-attracting countries in the developing world.

The digital divide between the industrialized countries and the Third World is strikingly evident in large parts of the Muslim world. According to the *Arab Human Development Report 2002*, the number of telephone lines in the Arab world is barely one-fifth of that in the

developed countries. Access to digital media in the Arab world is among the lowest in the world. There are just 18 computers per thousand people in the region, compared to the global average of 78.3 per thousand people. Only 1.6 per cent of the population in the Arab world has Internet access. International patenting provides an index of a country's technological progress. Hewlett-Packard, the world's leading patenting agency, registers on an average 11 new patents a day. Between 1980 and 1999, Arab countries produced 171 international patents while South Korea alone registered 16,328 patents during the same period.

The *Arab Human Reports* of 2002, 2003 and 2004 tell a sad story of failed planning, lack of vision and strategy and developmental decline. One inescapable conclusion that emerges from the reports is that the Arab world is in deep decline, even relative to the developing countries. The story in respect of the rest of the Muslim world is not substantially different.

Human rights

Autocratic rule, absence of political and civil rights, suppression of freedom of expression, opinion, association and dissent, media censorship and institutionalized gender discrimination are among the conspicuous features of many Muslim countries. According to the rankings of Freedom House (an American-based monitor of political and civil rights), almost two-thirds of the 192 countries around the world are now electoral democracies. But among the 47 countries with a Muslim majority, only one-fourth are electoral democracies and none of the core Arabic-speaking countries falls into this category. Out of seven world regions, the Arab countries have the lowest freedom score. Political participation is much less developed in the Arab world than in other developing countries in Latin America, East and South-East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. The *Arab Human Development Report 2002* identified lack of freedom as one of the three major deficits of Arab countries. By and large, the transfer of political power through the ballot box is a rare phenomenon in the Arab world. In many Muslim countries which have some semblance of democracy, elections are often manipulated. There is no dearth of autocratic and repressive



Elections in Kuwait held in June 2006, in which women participated with great enthusiasm, but failed to get any seat

regimes in the Muslim world, both in the recent past as well as today. Riding on the wave of Islamic resurgence, the Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria won the municipal and regional elections in 1990. On December 26, 1981 the first multi-party elections were held in the country. The Islamic Salvation Front emerged victorious in the first round, securing 48% of

the popular vote and 188 out of 231 parliamentary seats. The ruling National Liberation Front, on the other hand, could secure only 16 seats. The Islamic Salvation Front was widely expected to repeat its earlier performance in the second round of elections scheduled for January 16, 1992. However, on January 12 the pro-West Algerian army in a de facto coup seized power and stalled the election process in order to prevent the Islamic Salvation Front from winning. The military take over was followed by a brutal suppression of the Front, precipitating a civil war in which more than 75,000 Algerians were killed and nearly 15,000 leaders and activists of the Front were arrested and imprisoned.

In 1972, an Islamically-oriented political party, the National Salvation Party, was founded in Turkey under the leadership of Necmettin Erbakan. Its primary goal was the restoration of Turkey's Islamic character and the recovery of its glorious heritage. This provided an indication of the growing popular disenchantment with the secular, Western-oriented, military-backed policies of the ruling establishment. In 1995 Erbakan's party, renamed Refah Party, won the majority of seats in Turkey's National Assembly and Erbakan became the prime minister. However, the military, which still swears by the Kemalist ideology, declared the Refah Party unconstitutional, banned it from participating in elections, and removed Erbakan from premiership.



Autocratic regimes in Africa and in the newly-independent countries of Central Asia have generally responded to the rising wave of Islamic resurgence with brutal repression. In Central Asia thousands of Muslims who are involved in movements of Islamic revival were detained on fabricated charges. Many young men and women were dismissed from schools and universities for keeping beards and wearing the Islamic headscarf.

Media control and censorship are rampant in Muslim countries. Most media agencies in the Muslim world are state-owned. Journalists often face intimidation, harassment and victimization. The *Arab Human Development Report 2003* quotes Freedom House in recording that no Arab country has genuinely free media, and only three have "partly free" media. The Emir of Qatar was the first Gulf ruler to recently allow a free press in his country.

It is significant to note that there is a great yearning among the Muslim masses for democratic freedom and participation. Two most recent World Values surveys conducted in 1995-96 and 2000-2002, based on questionnaires that explore values and beliefs in more than 70 countries (comprising nearly 80% of the world's population), indicate that societies throughout the world (including Muslim societies) see democracy as the best form of government. Most of the Muslim countries surveyed think highly of democracy. In fact, in

Albania, Egypt, Bangladesh, Azerbaijan, Indonesia, Morocco and Turkey, 92 to 99 per cent of the population endorsed democratic institutions—a higher proportion than in the US (89 per cent).

The Human Development Report 2002 observed that “no society can achieve the desired state of well-being and human development, or compete in a globalizing world, if half of its people (women) remain marginalized and disempowered.” The position of women in the Muslim world today leaves much to be desired. The *Third Arab Human Development Report 2003* points out that the participation of Arab women in their countries’ political and economic life is the lowest in the world. Nearly in all Arab countries, women suffer from unequal citizenship and lack of legal entitlements. There is widespread disenfranchisement of women in Arab countries. Only four Gulf countries—Bahrain, Oman, Qatar and Kuwait—have given voting rights to women. The proportion of women in parliaments in Arab countries is extremely low. They occupy 3.5 per cent of all seats in parliaments, compared to 4.2 per cent in East Asia, 11 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa, 12.7 per cent in South-East Asia and the Pacific, and 12.9 per cent in Latin America and Caribbean countries. Women failed to win any seat in the parliamentary elections in Kuwait held on June 29, 2006.

The most immigrant-dense areas in the world are located in the sparsely-populated, oil-rich region of the Middle East: Qatar (63.7%), Kuwait (71.6%), UAE (90.1%), Saudi Arabia (25.76%), Oman (33.56%), Bahrain (35.12%), Jordan (26.39%). In most cases, the expatriate population hardly enjoys any political or civil rights.

Global culture and secularization

The global media, especially satellite television, advertising and the entertainment industry have acquired enormous salience in our globalizing era. Time Warner is the world’s biggest media corporation with assets larger than those of many developing countries. International trade agreements, such as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), are especially favourable to the global media corporations in that they facilitate the domination of local markets by media giants. Entertainment around the world is dominated by Hollywood films and videos. The largest export industry for the US is entertainment, especially Hollywood films and videos. Hollywood blockbusters, legally imported or pirated versions, are hugely popular in practically every city around the world.



Merve Kavakci, who was elected a member of the Turkish parliament in 1999, was ridiculed and prevented from taking oath because she entered parliament with her headscarf

The global media, Hollywood films and videos and advertising send out certain messages—explicit as well subtle—which are embedded in the values, lifestyles and cultural patterns of present-day Western societies, especially the United States. These include the glorification of individualism and self-gratification, consumerism and hedonism, sexual freedom (including

homosexuality and lesbianism), disregard for societal norms, and the glamorization of violence. One of the Hollywood video films *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* has become immensely popular among adolescents and has sold millions of copies worldwide. Targeted at young boys and girls in the age group of 8-12 years, the video exposes young viewers to sex and violence. There has been a phenomenal spurt in the US, Europe and even in the metropolitan cities of Asia in the sales of PG-13 films, such as *Loving Silverman*, which have explicit references to oral sex, masturbation and necrophilia. The celebrity singer Janet Jackson's hugely popular million-selling album *The Velvet Rope* makes explicit references to homosexuality. The album has been banned in China, Singapore and Malaysia.

Western products—Coca Cola, Levi jeans, Michael Jackson, Madonna, Mickey Mouse, Barbie dolls, American pop culture—are projected by the Western media as global products aimed at global audiences, transcending ethnic, religious and cultural distinctions. The projection of Western culture in the guise of global culture sends out the subtle and subliminal message to the younger generation in Asia and Africa that the value system and cultural patterns of the West are superior and preferable to those of non-Western societies. This globalized cultural hegemony poses a serious threat to the cultural traditions and identities of Muslims as well as other people living in non-Western societies. This produces confusion and ambivalence in the minds of the younger generation.

In our globalizing era, the role of parents and other members of the family in the socialization of children has been greatly reduced. Peer group, global media, educational institutions and networks in the wider society now play a much larger role in the socialization process. Muslim children, especially those living in Western countries as well as in large metropolitan cities in Asia, Africa and Latin America, are being increasingly exposed to cultural influences which are at variance with Islamic values and traditions.

Global processes and institutions, such as increasing mobility, the accelerated pace of life, secularization and global media, are producing consequences which are at best a mixture of positive and negative elements. Individualism and consumerism, for example, seem to be making inroads into Muslim societies, especially in the highly qualified professional class. Increasing mobility (involving relocation in other cities as well as transnational migration) and growing career-mindedness are bringing in their wake uprooting and alienation from the neighbourhood, community and cultural moorings. They are also producing disturbing consequences for parents and other elderly members of the family.

In some Muslim countries, the ruling establishment, military junta and the educated elite continue to be under the strong influence of Western culture and secularism. They tend to look down upon those of their compatriots who are deeply committed to Islamic values, traditions and cultural symbols and often make them a target of ridicule, derision and victimization. In 1999, Merve Kavakci, a computer scientist who was elected a member of the Turkish parliament, was prevented from taking oath and was subsequently stripped of her Turkish citizenship because she entered parliament with her Islamic headscarf. Earlier, her father, Yusuf Ziya Kavakci, had to resign as Dean of the Faculty of Islamic Studies at Ataturk University on account of supporting Muslim women's right to wear the *hijab*. Her

mother lost her teaching position at the same university for wearing the *hijab*. The family had to migrate to the United States.

Islamophobia

The Runnymede Trust in Britain set up a Commission on Islamophobia in 1997. The report of the Commission titled *Islamophobia: A Challenge to Us All*, revealed that Islamophobia—fear of and hostility towards Islam and Muslims—was one of the chief forms of racism in Britain. The report pointed out that for many in the Muslim community, to demean and vilify Islam was as exclusionary as racism and sapped their confidence to engage with reassurance with the wider society.

The wide prevalence of Islamophobia in large parts of the world, especially in Europe, United States and Australia, is reflected in the vilification and demonization of Islam and Muslims, in the opposition to the visibility of Islamic symbols (such as the Islamic headscarf) in public places, in the distortion and misrepresentation of matters related to Muslims by the Western media, in the racial profiling and surveillance of Muslims (in the United States), in attacks on mosques, in the discrimination against Muslims in respect of employment, housing and education, and in the tirade against Muslim immigrants by the far-right political parties and racist groups. It is widely believed in Europe that Islam is at variance with progressive values, that it encourages intolerance, fanaticism and aggression in its followers, and that it poses a threat to world peace. Nick Griffin, a leader of the far-right British National Party, had said in a recent speech that Islam was a vicious, wicked faith. He was tried for incitement to racial hatred, but on February 3, 2006 walked free at the end of the trial. In his defence, Griffin argued that he was attacking a religion (which, in the case of religions other than Christianity, is not an offence under British law), not a race.

Islamophobia has been fuelled by a cluster of circumstances, including the misrepresentation and disparagement of the Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979, the controversy arising out of Salman Rushdie's novel *Satanic Verses*, the controversial debate over the Islamic headscarf in France in 1989 and in subsequent years, the Madrid train bombings of 2004, the terrorist attack on the United States on September 11, 2001, the highly provocative writings and utterances of some influential intellectuals and writers such as Samuel Huntington, Bernard Lewis, V. S. Naipaul and Francis Fukuyama, the murder of the Dutch film maker Theo van Gogh in November 2004, and the terrorist attack on London in July 2005. The Salman

Rushdie affair in 1988-89 created a wide divide between Muslims and the wider British society. Rushdie, a self-professed atheist, was accused by Muslims of defaming and slandering the Prophet and his wives. Copies of *Satanic Verses* were burnt on streets. Some Muslims in Britain sought a ban on the book by invoking the anti-blasphemy law in Britain but found to their dismay that the law protected only the official state religion, namely Anglicanism. Ironically, some books, such as *Little Black Sambo*, are kept out of libraries in the US because they cause offence to certain sections of society. But the same sensitivity was not shown to Muslims in the case of Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*.

The resentment and hatred towards Muslim immigrants in European countries is sometimes manifested in assaults on Muslims and in the vandalization of mosques and community centres. In 1985 several mosques and Islamic centres were attacked and vandalized in several parts of the United States. Racist groups burnt a hostel for Turkish immigrants in Solinger in Germany in 1993. The opening of new mosques or prayer halls in Italy and Spain is often accompanied by protests by the local people. The far-right political parties in Europe, such as Front Nationale in France, the British National Party, Vlaams Belang in Belgium and Republikaner in Germany, are vocally anti-Muslim.

Islamophobia has been on the rise after 9/11, as the reports of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia testify (see <http://www.eumc.eu.int>). An Amnesty International report reveals that nearly 32 million people in the US, mostly Muslims from the Middle East and South Asia, have reported that they have been racially profiled in the wake of 9/11. The late UN human rights chief Sergio Vieira de Mello emphasized that the “war on terror” was exacerbating prejudices around the world, increasing discrimination against Arabs and Muslims and damaging human rights in industrialized as well as developing countries. Arabs and Muslims at large are experiencing increasing incidents of racial discrimination—singling out, finger printing and, in some instances, violence.

The Western media often distort and misrepresent news and events related to Muslims and thereby reinforce prejudices and stereotypes about the community. In the aftermath of 9/11, Italian television channels broadcasted visits by Italian officials and the police to local mosques in the southern and northern parts of Italy, which implicitly suggested that these mosques harboured Muslim fanatics and terrorists. This media focus created apprehensions in the local people about their own safety, who felt that the mosques should be closed down.

The wide prevalence of Islamophobia in large parts of the world, especially in Europe, United States and Australia, is reflected in the vilification and demonization of Islam and Muslims, in the opposition to the visibility of Islamic symbols (such as the Islamic headscarf) in public places, in the distortion and misrepresentation of matters related to Muslims by the Western media, in the racial profiling and surveillance of Muslims (in the United States), in attacks on mosques, in the discrimination against Muslims in respect of employment, housing and education, and in the tirade against Muslim immigrants by the far-right political parties and racist groups.

A recent manifestation of Islamophobia was the publication in September 2005 in a Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten of 12 highly derogatory caricatures of Prophet Muhammad. In



one of them he was shown wearing a bomb-shaped turban (thus portraying him as a terrorist). In early February 2006 several newspapers in 22 European countries republished the caricatures. The publication of these sacrilegious cartoons generated an enormous amount of anger and resentment among Muslims across the world, which was expressed in massive protests and demonstrations and in the call to boycott Danish goods.

Muslim diasporas

Large-scale transnational migration is one of the defining features of globalization. According to an International Labour Organization analysis of migration patterns in 152 countries, between 1970 and 1990 the number of countries classified as major receivers of labour immigrants rose from 39 to 67. It is estimated that some 175 million people live outside of their countries of origin. About three out of five international migrations are located in Western countries. According to the United Nations' 2000 International Migration Report, one person out of ten living in the industrialized nations is an immigrant. In France, which greatly emphasizes cultural homogeneity,

fourteen million French citizens—nearly a quarter of the country's population—have at least one immigrant parent or grandparent. The majority of Australia's population consists of immigrants from over a hundred countries.

Large numbers of expatriate Muslims, including their second and third generation descendants, live as citizens or residents in Europe, North and South America, Australia, New Zealand and some of the African countries. The number of Muslims living in Europe is estimated at 33 million. The largest concentrations of Muslims are to be found in France, Britain, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Spain and Belgium. The number of Muslims in the US, Canada and Latin America is nearly ten million. The first generation of Muslim immigrants in most European countries was recruited as cheap labour required for the post-War reconstruction of European societies. Initially, European states believed that migrant labour would be a transient phase and the immigrants would return to their countries after the expiry of their contract. However, the demand for cheap labour in the rapidly developing European economies continued unabated. Meanwhile, various European states allowed

family reunion for immigrants. Consequently, the first generation of immigrants decided to stay back in their adopted homelands where their descendants were born and raised. In France, for example, more than 30% of immigrants belong to the second, French-born generation. Muslim immigrants, like immigrants in general, have made a highly important contribution to European economies. For example, France's rapid economic expansion after World War II owes much to the sweat and toil of Muslim immigrants from the former French colonies in North Africa. A substantial proportion of the labour force across Europe and in other industrialized countries is aging, resulting in a falling supply of labour and skills. The immigrants fill in this lacuna. A UN study points out that Europe will need 1.6 million migrants a year for the next 45 years to maintain its work force at current levels to replenish aging populations and falling birth rates.

The experience of Muslims in Western countries and the record of Western states in addressing their concerns and in integrating them into mainstream society present a mixed picture. On the whole, Western societies offer Muslims as well as other immigrants a fairly good package, comprising better economic prospects, opportunities for higher education and professional training, civil and political rights, personal autonomy, and religious and cultural freedom (which, incidentally, is scarce in many Muslim countries). Muslims in Europe and North America have their own mosques (Paris alone has nearly a hundred mosques), burial grounds, religious schools (which are funded by the state in some countries), enjoy the freedom to celebrate their feasts and festivals and have the facility for *halal* meat. Muslim women move about freely in their traditional attire, including the *hijab*. Nearly all European countries provide facilities for imparting instruction to the children of immigrants in their national languages. Several European countries, including Belgium, Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands, are now supporting imams brought from Turkey, Morocco and other Islamic countries to provide Islamic instruction to Muslim children.

On the other hand, Muslims in Western societies are faced with a host of problems and challenges, including xenophobia and institutionalized racism, unclear citizenship, lack of legal security, discrimination, exclusion and stigmatization. Laws, policies and procedures in many European societies betray bias and discrimination against Muslims and other minorities. The 2005 Annual Report of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia reveals that Muslims, as well as other immigrants and national minorities (such as Gypsies), regularly experience exclusion, discrimination and racism in respect of employment, housing and education. This is reflected in discriminatory housing advertisements and outright refusal by landlords, real estate agents and housing associations. As a result of this exclusion and discrimination, Muslims and other immigrants are forced to live in overcrowded flats and under unhygienic and poor conditions. Segregation and ghettoization along religious and ethnic lines is prevalent throughout Europe, particularly in France, Spain, Sweden, Portugal and Cyprus. The report refers to a research at the University of Paris which found that job applicants with a disability, followed by those of North African background, were the main victims of discriminatory treatment.

France swears by the republican ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity. In reality, however, Muslim immigrants from North Africa (including their descendants born and raised in France) experience widespread discrimination, exclusion and marginalization. French society is differentiated according to class, religion and ethnicity. Mainstream jobs and positions remain largely with the white, upper class, Christian majority. The suburbs, where the majority of Muslims live, are characterized by poverty, high unemployment rate, crime and drug addiction. Faced with this gloomy situation, many Muslim youths are forced to change their names and to conceal their local addresses for fear that the revelation of their real identity will jeopardize the prospects of getting a job. In November 2005 North African youths indulged in large-scale rioting and vandalism on the streets of Paris (where nearly 1400 cars were torched in a single night). The rioting was triggered by the accidental death by electrocution of two North African youths who were being chased by the French police.

There are indications that things are getting increasingly difficult for Muslims as well as for potential immigrants in Western countries. The far-right political parties in Europe, which make no secret of their antipathy towards Muslims and other immigrants, are growing in popularity. Thus in Belgium, the right-wing, anti-immigrant Vlaam Belang Party won nearly a quarter of the national vote in the 2004 elections. In Sweden, the Office of Multicultural Affairs was closed down and funds for the welfare of immigrants were substantially curtailed in the face of growing public hostility towards immigrants. There has been an increase in racist attacks on Muslims in many European countries. The 2005 Report of the European Monitoring Centre on Xenophobia and Racism revealed that there were as many as 52,694 racist attacks in Britain during the period 2003-2004, followed by Germany with 6,474 incidents. Some European countries have devised subtle methods of discouraging potential immigrants. In the Netherlands, for example, would-be immigrants are shown a film which depicts a topless white woman cavorting on a beach. Another shot focuses on two white men engaged in a passionate kiss in a park. This is meant to provide snapshots of the culture of the host country (which may shock the potential immigrants and dissuade them from migrating).

The dependency syndrome

The overall scenario in large parts of the Muslim world today is defined by an excessive dependence on foreign military technology, hardware and personnel, on Western technology and technicians, on the massive import of Western goods and services, on Western financial institutions for trade as well as investment, on Western educational and professional institutions, and on foreign ideologies and models. There is a conspicuous absence of a spirit and culture of self-reliance, of concern with developing indigenous technology and invigorating local industries, and an unfortunate dearth of professionalism and entrepreneurship, of vision and long-term strategy.

The *Arab Human Development Report 2003* points out that the experience of Arab countries with the transfer and adoption of technology has neither achieved the desired technological advancement nor yielded attractive returns on investments. Importing technology has not

led to its adoption and internalization in the host country. The factors responsible for this sorry state of affairs include the absence of an environment conducive for scientific and technological research, dearth of scientific institutions, low investment in research and development, and shortage of professionally trained local personnel.

Edward Said, a sympathetic observer of the Islamic world, once perceptively remarked that the Muslim world in general and the Arab world in particular have become an intellectual, political and cultural satellite of the Western world, particularly the US. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, one of the most distinguished Islamic scholars of today, hardly exaggerates when he says that “we have made ourselves an appendix to Western thought.”

Responding to the challenges of globalization

A deep and pervasive sense of despair and hopelessness, coupled with anger and resentment, seems to prevail in large parts of the Muslim world. In his farewell speech as prime minister of Malaysia at an Islamic summit hosted by him on October 16, 2003, Mahathir Mohammed raised the question as to why Muslim civilization has become so humiliated, and then added, “our only reaction (to this malaise) is to become more and more angry. Angry people cannot think properly.”

A dispassionate, carefully crafted and effective response to the challenges of globalization faced by the Islamic world, or to the predicament of the Muslim *ummah* in general, is thwarted by a set of impediments. There is an unfortunate absence in the Muslim world of critical reflection and a realistic and balanced appraisal of the global scenario, the prospects and opportunities afforded by it, and the obstacles in availing of these opportunities. By and large, the perception and response of the Muslim world to the challenges of globalization is characterized by a blissful ignorance of the rapidly changing global scenario, complacency and self-righteousness, hypersensitivity and defensiveness, absence of collective self-introspection, pervasive disunity and dissension, paucity of coordination and concerted action, and lack of vision and farsightedness.



A Jordanian woman displays a message received on her mobile phone (following the cartoon controversy) which says, "If we keep boycotting Danish products till next summer, they will lose at least 36 million euros."



Mecca-Cola and Zamzam-Cola, made in Iran and becoming hugely popular in the Muslim world, offer an alternative to US brands such as Coca-Cola and Pepsi-Cola

However, as the saying goes, every cloud has a silver lining. During the past two decades there has come about a refreshing revival and resurgence of Islamic consciousness in large parts of the Muslim world. This is reflected in the increasing popularity of Islamic literature (including Islamic software), the growing involvement of the Muslim elite, women and youth in faith-based communitarian activities and programmes, the growth of local associations and organizations, and the salience of transnational Islamic movements. Islamic banking and financial services have emerged as a major force in the Islamic world. In response to the growing demand for Shariah-oriented financial services from their Muslim clientele, some of the major international banks have started their own Islamic financial services. Leading banks such as HSBC and Citi have set up full-fledged Shariah advisory boards of Islamic

scholars to offer advice on new financial products such as Islamic bonds and hedge bonds. In 2003 HSBC bank launched an “Islamic mortgage” scheme in Britain to provide *halal* loans for house purchase. Deutsche Bank is a majority shareholder in the Dar al Istithmar Sharia Consultancy. Investment bankers in the Western world are competing to create a range of new Islamic capital market products on a large scale.



A conference of more than 150 imams and religious leaders in Europe, held in Vienna in April 2006, emphasized an integration of Islamic identity and core European values.

One of the major ailments affecting the Islamic world is the absence of free media. Satellite television channels are

now challenging the monopoly of the state over the means of production and dissemination of information, thereby increasing the space for civil society. A revolutionary breakthrough in this direction came about with the launch of Al-Jazeera, an independent television channel, in Qatar in 1996. Al-Jazeera is broadcasted via satellite and Internet free of charge around the world. The programmes aired on the channel are marked by objectivity, balance and a high degree of professionalism. Al-Jazeera enjoys huge popularity in the Arab world as

well as in the Arabic-speaking diaspora in Western countries, with an estimated audience of over 40 million.

It is gratifying to note that, by and large, Muslims living in Western countries have not given in to despondency and despair in the face of trying circumstances. They have sought to come to grips with challenges and problems with courage of conviction and determination and without compromising their cherished beliefs and values. They have created large religious and cultural spaces—mosques, prayer halls, community centres, Islamic schools, local organizations—in order to meet the religious and cultural requirements of the local Muslim communities. At the same time, they consider themselves as full-fledged citizens of the countries where they are living and participate in the social, economic and political affairs of the local communities as well as the wider society.



Seyyed Mohammad Khatami, the former president of the Islamic Republic of Iran, emphasized the value and centrality of inter-civilizational dialogue for the management of world affairs

A positive development in recent years is the growing tendency on the part of Muslims living in Western countries to get their grievances redressed and to secure their legitimate rights within the legal and constitutional framework, and not in the name of minority rights. In Germany, for example, Muslims are seeking the resolution of their problems from within German society. The German constitution, for instance, allows religious instruction in state-funded schools. The demand by German Muslims for allowing Islamic teachings in schools is legitimized in the framework of this constitutional provision. Similarly, the decisions by the Supreme Administrative Courts in Germany that allow Muslim girls in some cities to be exempted from coeducational sports lessons, or the recent court decision that grants Muslims the right to slaughter animals according to their religious ritual, were informed and guided by the basic principle of freedom of religion guaranteed by the German constitution. The courts in Germany as well as in other European countries are playing a highly important role in granting legal recognition to the religious and cultural rights of Muslims and other minorities.

In his farewell speech as prime minister of Malaysia at an Islamic summit hosted by him on October 16, 2003, Mahathir Mohammed raised the question as to why Muslim civilization has become so humiliated, and then added, “our only reaction (to this malaise) is to become more and more angry. Angry people cannot think properly.”

nationality in 1995. In 1998 she completed her education to become a teacher in an elementary school, but was refused commission because she was not willing to remove her headscarf before class. She filed a petition in the Supreme Court. She argued that her wearing of the headscarf represented individual and religiously motivated conduct that was protected by the German constitution. The Supreme Court gave the verdict in her favour. In the Netherlands, a Muslim woman's registration in a teacher training programme was cancelled because she refused to shake hand with a male teacher on religious grounds. She approached the Committee for Equal Treatment, a state institution which has been created to deal with the issue of discrimination on grounds of race, gender or conviction, which ruled in her favour.

There is an increasing appreciation among Muslims of the positive role of dialogue and negotiation in creating an atmosphere of understanding and harmony. A pioneering move in this direction was taken by Seyyed Mohammad Khatami, the former president of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In his key-note address at a Unesco conference on April 5, 2005, Mr Khatami emphasized the centrality of dialogue among civilizations for the management of world affairs. He stressed that dialogue among civilizations signifies the rejection of terrorism and violence. Religious leaders and transnational Islamic bodies like the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) are playing an important role in projecting the value of inter-civilizational dialogue and harmony as an important means of removing misunderstandings about Islam. The concluding statement of the first European conference of Imams in Graz (Austria) in 2003 declared that Muslim identity is compatible with the values of democracy, the rule of law, pluralism and human rights.

Islamic banking and financial services have emerged as a major force in the Islamic world. In response to the growing demand for Shariah-oriented financial services from their Muslim clientele, some of the major international banks have started their own Islamic financial services. Leading banks such as HSBC and Citi have set up full-fledged Shariah advisory boards of Islamic scholars to offer advice on new financial products such as Islamic bonds and hedge bonds. In 2003 HSBC bank launched an "Islamic mortgage" scheme in Britain to provide *halal* loans for house purchase.

Inter-Cultural Dialogue in a Globalizing World

IOS Research Network

In many respects, globalization is a paradoxical phenomenon. Thus, on the one hand, modern information and communication technologies as well as extensive migrations and travels have brought about greater awareness about the salience of ethnic and cultural diversity across the world. This has also resulted in greater contact, interaction and intermingling among people from diverse ethnic, religious and national backgrounds. On the other hand, there is a far greater awareness of the existence of wide asymmetries of power, resources and opportunities across the world, the spurt in ethnic, religious and regional conflicts in large parts of the world, growing xenophobia and racism directed against ethnic and religious minorities, and the growing tentacles of global terrorism.



Lord Adam Hafizjee Patel, member of the House of Lords in Britain

Conflict seems to be an endemic phenomenon. The roots of conflict lie in a complex interplay of multiple factors, including the inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities, the tendency on the part of the dominant majority to establish and perpetuate its hegemony, the exclusion, marginalization and demonization of minorities, and a long-suppressed sense of deprivation and frustration. Social and ethnic conflicts can be triggered with ease in an atmosphere which is suffused with mistrust, resentment and hatred. Conflicts are often embedded in cognitive and psychological processes. It is now widely recognized that conflict is not inevitable, that it is possible as well as imperative to manage and resolve it through negotiation and dialogue and through the creation of an environment which fosters a spirit of mutual trust, understanding, good will and accommodation.

The creation of an atmosphere conducive for inter-cultural and inter-civilizational dialogue entails certain prerequisites. First, it requires an open recognition and tolerance of ethnic, religious and cultural diversities. Evidently, the need for dialogue arises in a situation where people have different perceptions and attitudes, which are largely conditioned by cultural and religious factors, towards different communities as well as issues. Second, self-righteousness, xenophobia, bigotry and a condescending and exclusionary attitude are the biggest stumbling blocs in inter-cultural dialogue. (The US Lieutenant-General William Boykin, while describing his battle against Muslims, remarked, "I know that my God was bigger than his (Muslim's), that my God was a real God and the Muslim's was an idol." *International Herald Tribune*, August 27, 2004. This kind of bigoted and obscurantist attitude leaves absolutely no room for inter-cultural or any other kind of dialogue.) Inter-cultural dialogue cannot be set in motion unless there is a substantial measure of openness, inter-cultural sensibility,

magnanimity and an accommodative and inclusionary spirit between the dialogue partners. Our perceptions and judgement about other people are conditioned for the most part by uncritically held assumptions, prejudices and stereotypes. No fruitful and viable dialogue between peoples and communities can take place unless such assumptions and stereotypes about others are set aside, unless simplifications and generalizations (which are often based on distortion and misrepresentation) about different groups and communities are eliminated. Third, the dialogue process should be informed by a sense of optimism and hope. One should bear in mind the fact that differences are neither irreconcilable nor inevitable and that they can be ironed out and resolved through discussion, negotiation and dialogue. Fourth, inter-cultural dialogue cannot take place in a socio-cultural and existential vacuum. It should address the historical, social, political, cultural, and psychological contexts of the issues and problems that cause mistrust and friction between different groups and communities.

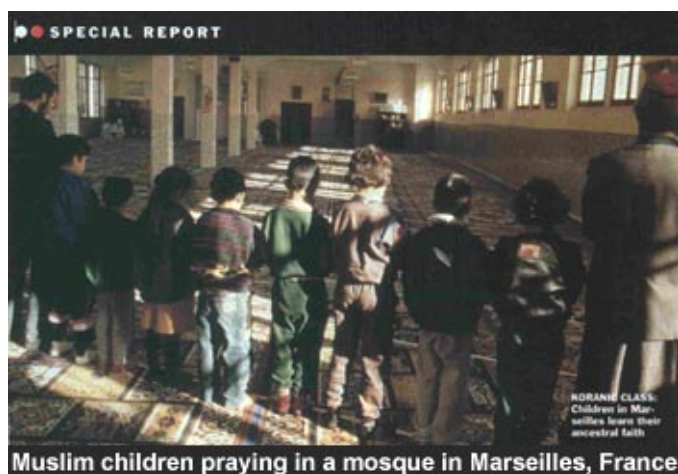
Clash of civilizations?

Samuel Huntington, an American political scientist, wrote an article “The Clash of Civilizations” in *Foreign Affairs* in 1993. The article generated a great deal of discussion and controversy in academia as well as in political circles across large parts of the world. Subsequently, Huntington expanded the arguments contained in the article in a book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* (1996). The crux of Huntington’s argument is the following:

It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in the world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be *cultural*.

Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. *The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future.* (*The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*, p.22, *emphasis added*.)

Huntington identifies seven or eight major civilizations (Western, Confucian (Sinic), Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American, and possibly African). Focusing on the cultural lines of demarcation between the Western and Islamic civilizations, he sees Islam and Christianity as potentially pitted against each other as the defining feature of an evolving global scenario. The fault lines, according to Huntington, that may be a source of conflict in the future include



that between Islam and Christianity (or animism) in Africa, and between the Hindu and Islamic civilizations in South Asia. Huntington predicts that the next war, if it ever occurs, will be a war between civilizations.

Huntington's conceptualization of civilization and his view of the dynamics of civilization are highly problematic. He takes an essentialised, homogeneous and monolithic view of civilization and ignores the internal diversities within each civilization. He characterizes Indian civilization as Hindu civilization, oblivious of the fact that Buddhism was a dominant religion of the country for over a thousand years (India is often described in the Chinese chronicles as "the Buddhist kingdom"), that India has the third largest Muslim population in the world (nearly 150 million), and that Islam has played a highly important role in the development and enrichment of Indian civilization. Huntington's classification of people into categories such as Western civilization and Hindu civilization is too facile, simplistic and straitjacketed. This sweeping categorization glosses over the internal variations in these civilizations, which are reflected in class, ethnicity, location and nationality. As Amartya Sen has rightly pointed out, it is open to question whether humanity can be preeminently classified into distinct and discrete civilizations (*Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*, 2006, pp. 10-11.)

Huntington's understanding of the dynamics of civilization and of world history is foggy, reductionistic and cynical. He takes a highly exaggerated view of conflict and strife and pays little or no attention to the processes of interaction and exchange between civilizations. Eric Wolf has convincingly argued that interconnections between societies and civilizations are far more widespread than has commonly been assumed. Wolf says that it is misleading to regard the world as an "archipelago of cultures" because cultures and civilizations have been, more often than not, in contact. Underlying Huntington's clash of civilizations thesis is a simplistic and coarse theory of the dynamics of human society and of history.

Huntington's view of Western and Islamic civilizations as discrete and rather fossilized entities betrays his ignorance of the role of Islamic civilization in the shaping of Western civilization. The transmission of the scientific and philosophical legacy of the Greco-Roman civilization to Europe during the Middle Ages, which ushered in the Renaissance and played a key role in the flowering of Western civilization, was largely carried out by Muslim scientists, philosophers and translators. The wide-ranging contributions made by Muslims to the development of modern science and medicine, technology and engineering, arts and crafts and architecture have been amply documented. (see J. R. Hayes, ed. *The Genius of Arab Civilization: Source of Renaissance*, Cambridge, Mass., 1983) Lord Bhikhu Parekh has rightly pointed out that Islam has been a part of Western consciousness for hundreds of years. Therefore, he says, to juxtapose Western and Muslim societies as wholly incompatible civilizations is totally fraudulent.

Exposing the naivete, myopia and cynicism inherent in Huntington's analysis, *The Economist* pointed out that "it is striking that the new wave of self-awareness in the Muslim world has not produced any serious move towards a merger of Muslim states, that in the Orthodox Christian part of the world.....the recent tendency has been for things to fall apart, not come together.....None of this would suggest that the world is heading for that fearful

sounding “clash of civilizations”, but rather that global alignments would continue to be determined by the play of interests among nation states of whatever civilization.” (*The Economist*, December 23, 1995-January 26, 1996).

Huntington takes a rather complacent and uncritical view of Western civilization and exaggerates its salient features and virtues. Thus he asserts that social pluralism, individualism and a tradition of individual rights and liberties in the West are unique among civilized societies. He conveniently glosses over the dark side of Western civilization, as reflected in the Crusades, the Inquisition (which offered Muslims the options of conversion, expulsion or execution), the Spanish *Reconquista* (which provided the first instance of ethnic cleansing in Europe in the 15th century when Muslims, together with the Jews and the gypsies, were forced to leave the country), repressive regimes in Europe, European colonialism, anti-Semitism, and the West’s role in undermining the rights and liberties of people in Africa and Asia. (Anti-Semitism has been one of the darkest spots on the face of Western societies. Until the late 1960s, many prestigious universities in the United States maintained restrictive quotas that limited Jewish enrollment. Social clubs often denied, until quite recently, membership to Jews. In 1995 there were more than 1800 anti-Semitic incidents in the US, including acts of violence against Jews and against synagogues. In France, which is home to Europe’s largest Jewish population, there were 974 incidents of attacks on Jews in 2004, following which the former Israeli premier Ariel Sharon called French Jews to migrate to Israel because of “the wildest anti-Semitism prevalent in the country.”)

The hollowness of Huntington’s clash of civilizations thesis has been exposed by some of the world’s leading thinkers and intellectuals. Edward Said, for example, decried the clash of civilizations thesis as a deplorable attempt to revive the old good vs. evil dichotomy prevalent during the Cold War era (Edward Said, “A Clash of Ignorance”, *The Nation*, October 22, 2001). Huntington’s views have also been publicly denounced by heads of states, statesmen and politicians in many Western countries. The former American president Bill Clinton, in a speech to the Jordanian parliament in 1994, strongly repudiated the clash of civilizations thesis, noting that “there are those who insist that there are impassable religious and other obstacles to harmony, that our beliefs and our cultures must somehow inevitably clash....America refuses to accept that our civilizations must collide.”

Huntington states that “the fault lines between civilizations are replacing the political and ideological boundaries of the Cold War as the flash points of crisis and bloodshed.” The events that unfolded in the aftermath of 9/11 belied Huntington’s prognostication. The massive anti-war protests and demonstrations across Europe, North America, Australia and other parts of the world before the American-led invasion of Iraq and the sharp differences between some of the major European countries and the US and its allies before and after the invasion exposed the absurdity of Huntington’s thesis.

Huntington’s clash of civilizations thesis rests on fallacious premises and questionable assumptions about the dynamics of human society and of civilization. It is reductionistic and myopic and therefore needs to be discarded. The focus should be on interaction, exchange

and dialogue among cultures, civilizations and nation states in the context of our globalizing era.

Inter-cultural understanding and dialogue in Islamic perspective

Certain broad premises and principles, enshrined in the Holy Quran and the Traditions of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) have a significant bearing on inter-cultural and inter-civilizational dialogue. These include an explicit recognition of religious and cultural diversity, a universalist and inclusionary view of divinity and of prophecy, freedom of belief and conscience, tolerance and peaceful coexistence, protection of the rights of minorities, and an emphasis on the creation of a culture of peace and amity.

Islam takes due cognizance of racial, ethnic and religious diversities that characterize human societies across the world and holds that these diversities are divinely ordained (Quran 11:118; 30:22; 25:54). In the Islamic view, God is not a racial or parochial deity who is concerned only about Muslims but the Lord of the universe and of all humankind. Furthermore, divine presence is not confined to specific sites or modes of worship. Thus the Quran says: “Had God not checked one set of people by means of another, there would surely been pulled down monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques in which the name of God is commemorated in abundant measure” (22:40).

Islam’s universalist and inclusionary orientation is also reflected in its view of prophecy. The Quran says that God has sent down prophets to all peoples and to all parts of the world (35:24). A Tradition of the Prophet says that there have been as many as 124,000 prophets at different points of time. Muslims are required to believe not only in the prophecy of Muhammad but in that of all other divine messengers. Likewise, they have to believe, in addition to the Quran, in all other divine scriptures.

Peaceful coexistence, tolerance and accommodation are among the cardinal features of the Islamic faith. The Quran explicitly maintains that there is no place in Islam for compulsion in religious matters (2:256; 109:6). Though Islam is against idol-worship, Muslims are advised not to revile those who worship idols or images (Quran 6:108). The Prophet is advised to invite people to the path of righteousness and guidance, not through intimidation and coercion, but in a gentle and amiable manner. Thus the Quran says: “Invite (all) to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching, and argue with them in the best of ways” (16:125). It is significant to note that when God asked Prophet Moses (may peace and blessings of God be upon him) to go to the Pharaoh in order to invite him to the path of righteousness, he was told to “speak to him mildly, perchance he may heed the warning or fear God” (Quran 20:44).

The followers of Semitic religions, especially Jews and Christians (who are described in the Quran as People of the Book), share some fundamental articles of faith, notably monotheism, with Muslims. The Quran contains a positive affirmation of Judaism and Christianity. All the Hebrew prophets (many of whom are mentioned in the Quran by name) as well as Jesus Christ are also the prophets of Muslims. The Quran emphasizes that the tenet of monotheism should provide the cornerstone of dialogue and reconciliation between

Jews, Christians and Muslims (3:64). The special affinity between Muslims and Jews and Christians is reflected in the permission accorded to inter-marriages between them and the permissibility for Muslims of the flesh of animals slaughtered by Jews and Christians (5:5). The attitude and behaviour of the Prophet towards Jews and Christians in Madina exhibited remarkable tolerance, broad-mindedness and compassion. Some Jewish families lived in his neighbourhood in Madina. If one of their children fell sick, the Prophet would make it a point to visit the distressed family as a gesture of good will and sympathy. If the funeral of a Jew happened to pass by while he was around, he would stand up as a mark of respect for the deceased.

Islam and the West

The relations between Christendom and the Islamic world, which are home to nearly half of the human population, have been characterized, at different points of time, by a curious mixture of peaceful and harmonious coexistence, mistrust and vilification, competition and contestation, and violent confrontation.

Norman Daniel, in his book *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image* (1960), has shown that from the time of St. John of Damascus in the eighth century and Peter the Venerable in the twelfth century, the Western perception of Islam has been shaped, for the most part, by ignorance, prejudice and misrepresentation. St. John (d. 750) regarded Islam as a Christian heresy. This perception was reinforced by the Crusades. Pope Innocent III described Prophet Muhammad as the Antichrist. The Royal Chaplain and Father Confessor of Spain, Jaime Bleda, introduced the Prophet as the deceiver of the world, false prophet, Satan's messenger, the Beast of the Apocalypse and the worst precursor of the Antichrist. The Prophet was debunked by Christian polemicists as an ambitious schemer, a bandit, an impostor and even an epileptic. His claim to prophecy was dismissed as fraudulent and his religion a sum of heresy. Mosques were described as synagogues of Satan. Martin Luther wrote several treatises attacking the Quran and Prophet Muhammad. He dubbed Islam as a false religion. (*Islam and the West: The Making of an Image*, pp. 246, 276; see also R. W. Southern: *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (1962), and Minou Reeves: *Muhammad in Europe: A Thousand Years of Western Myth Making* (2000))

The Crusades (1095-1292) cast a long and ominous shadow for several centuries over Christian-Muslim relations. In a recent article, Daniel Johnson writes that in the eyes even of most Christians, the Crusades were a crime against humanity, one for which apologies are due, especially to Muslims. (Daniel Johnson, "How to Think About the Crusades" *Commentary*, 120 (1), July-August 2005) The Crusades were a barbaric, unprovoked war of aggression, conquest and extermination. As several Western historians have pointed out, many of the crusaders were motivated by greed and avarice and by the pursuit of land and plunder. Anti-Islamic rhetoric incited the passions of the crusaders. Pope Urban II contemptuously described Muslims as "a race utterly alien to God." When Jerusalem fell in 1099, the crusaders vandalized and devastated the city and massacred tens of thousands of Muslims and Jews. For Jews, who had been living in the city in peace and harmony with Muslims, it was a catastrophe unprecedented since the destruction of the Temple. Soon the

definition of crusade was widened to include the extermination of Jews, heretics and pagans in Europe and elsewhere. During the fourth Crusade, which was diverted from the reconquest of Jerusalem and instead turned to the sacking of Constantinople in 1204, Eastern Orthodox Christians also suffered at the hands of the crusaders.

A few years ago, the Nobel Prize-winning German novelist Guenter Grass suggested that Pope John Paul II, “who knows how lasting and devastating the disaster wrought by the mentality and actions of Christian crusaders have been”, should issue a formal apology to the Muslim world.

Muslims ruled over Spain for nearly eight centuries. During this period, Spain developed a composite civilization based on a confluence of Muslim, Christian and Jewish cultural traditions. Andalusia or Muslim Spain provided an enviable example of a multiethnic society where people belonging to diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds lived in peace and harmony. Science and medicine, technology and engineering, philosophy and literature, architecture and crafts attained an unprecedented efflorescence during this period. This magnificent chapter of Spanish history and culture came to an unfortunate and barbaric end in the fifteenth century. In 1492, the Spanish Queen Isabel and King Ferdinand ordered the forcible expulsion of all Muslims, together with the Jews and the gypsies.

One of the factors in recent history which aggravated the strained relations between the West and the Islamic world was the European colonization of Muslim lands which began with the conquest of India and the scramble for Africa in the 19th century. Large parts of Africa, the Arab world, Southeast Asia and Central Asia were colonized by the major European powers. The division and fragmentation of Muslim lands, propelled by the geopolitical and commercial interests of the European colonial powers, resulted in an extensive plunder and exploitation of natural and human resources and severely undermined the unity and solidarity of the Muslim *ummah*. (see “Introduction” *100 Great Muslim Leaders of the 20th Century*, published by the Institute of Objective Studies, New Delhi, 2006)

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bosnian Serbs carried out a brutal pogrom of ethnic cleansing and genocide in the early 1990s when thousands of Muslims and Croats were expelled or murdered in cold blood in order to create ethnically homogeneous areas under Serb control. Virtually the entire population of Bosnia-Herzegovina comprising 4.4 million people was uprooted. Around three million people became internal refugees. More than a million people were forced to migrate to other European states. Tens of thousands of Muslim women were raped by Serb soldiers. Thousands of people were brutally massacred, whose remains were later discovered in mass graves. The Western world responded to this disaster of enormous proportions with indifference. No real initiative was taken by the Western powers or the Roman Catholic Church. The Christian churches in Bosnia were severely compromised. Radavan Karadjic, the Serb general who masterminded the whole operation, was never reprimanded by the Serbian Orthodox Church. The Vatican extended its support only to Catholic Croatia. To rub salt in the wound, many people in Europe even talked of a Muslim conspiracy to create a Muslim state in the heart of Europe (although Bosnia had all the features of a secular, multiethnic state). It was after four years of ethnic cleansing and genocide that the United States decided to intervene in the war.

A distinguished Dutch scholar Jacques Waardenburg commented on the demonization of Islam and Muslims in the Balkans in particular and in Western Europe in general in the following words:

In Western Europe, as in the Balkans, the larger churches, including Roman Catholics and Anglicans, Lutherans and Calvinists, and also secular ideologists, have fundamentalist currents and quarters for whom Islam is, if not the Antichrist, at least a nightmare; more than once it is seen as an enemy. In the light of what happened in Bosnia and the responses to them in European societies, I have become more realistic than I was some 15 years earlier. One can no longer afford to be optimistic about the future of Muslim communities in Europe as ethnic, cultural and religious minorities (Jacques Waardenburg, "Religion and Politics in the Balkans" *Islamic Studies*, 36 (2-3), 1997).

Aggressive proselytization by Christian missionaries, particularly by Evangelical sects, and their inimical portrayal of Islam has adversely affected the relations between Muslims and Christians. During the colonial era, Christian missionaries by and large enjoyed the tacit support and patronage of colonial governments. Missionary activity among Muslims was part of a larger global scheme for proselytism that also included Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, animists and the followers of other religions. Missionaries often employed the vocabulary of imperialism and spoke in terms of the spiritual and moral conquest of Africa and Asia. Some missionaries, who were associated with universities and other academic institutions and had a biased opinion about Islam, were projected as experts on Islam and Muslims. One such missionary scholar was Samuel M. Zwemer (1867-1952), an American minister of the Dutch Reformed Church who established missions in Iraq and Bahrain and edited the journal *The Muslim World*. Zwemer consistently portrayed Islam as a fanatical and retrogressive faith that was incompatible with rationality and modernity. In his book with a wishful title *The Disintegration of Islam* (1916) he predicted the eventual demise of the Islamic faith.

In recent years there has emerged a strong, aggressive Evangelical fundamentalism, especially in the United States. Pentecostalism, an Evangelical sect, is the fastest growing sect within Christianity with some 500 million followers. There are more than 140,000 American missionaries engaged in aggressive proselytization around the world. It is significant to note that even the Roman Catholic Church looks at the current resurgence of Evangelism with apprehension. Pope John Paul II often called the Evangelical sects in Christianity "rapacious wolves devouring Catholics and causing divisions and discord in our communities." It is an open secret that the US president George W. Bush has strong Evangelical leanings. He claimed that his decision to invade Iraq was "a mission from God." Bush and his loyal foot-soldier Tony Blair are said to have prayed together in the lead-up to the Iraq invasion and are believed to share a "spiritual affinity." Bush's post-9/11 invocation of a 'crusade' against Muslim terrorists and their sponsors and the US military programme to develop a 'crusader artillery system' assume significance against this backdrop.

The Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences has recently pointed out that

A phenomenon which continues to awaken the most resentment among the peoples of Asia is that of proselytism and conversion. In the minds of Asians, the Church's primary objective seems to be to convert as many people as she can so as to increase her little flock. Church expansion is also seen as a Western extension. The increase in the number of Church movements engaged in aggressive and militant evangelization (understood in the very narrow sense of the word) is certainly a case for concern for our brothers and sisters of other faiths. Perhaps, it might be good to be reminded of the golden rule which nearly all religions speak of: Do not do to others what you would not want done to yourself.

There is a widespread resentment in the Muslim world about the blind support extended by the US and its allies to Israel despite its intransigence and defiance of international law and of UN resolutions. In an international seminar held at Harvard University in 1997, it was reported that the elites of countries comprising nearly two-thirds of the world's people—Chinese, Russians, Arabs, Muslims, Africans and Indians—see the US as the single greatest threat to their societies and as a menace to their integrity, autonomy, prosperity and freedom of expression. They view the US as intrusive, interventionist, exploitative, unilateralist, hegemonic, hypocritical, and engaging in financial imperialism and intellectual colonialism (quoted in Samuel Huntington, "The Lonely Superpower" *Foreign Affairs*, (March-April 1999), pp. 35-49).



A representative of the Islamic Council of Australia talking to young surfers on the beach after Australia's worst racial riots in December 2005

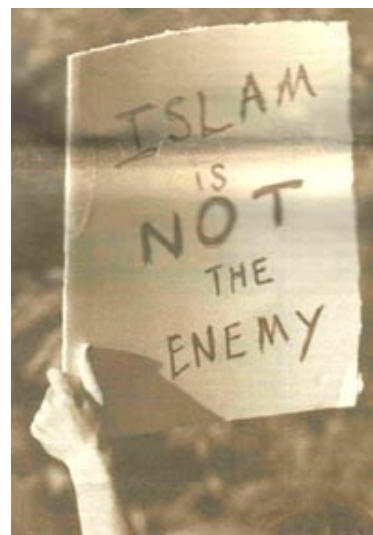
The events that unfolded in the wake of the attack on the United States on September 11, 2001 and the subsequent invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq forebode the emergence of a new imperialism, represented by the hubris, hegemony and the unilateralist interventionist of the US and its allies. American policy makers frequently refer to the US as the indispensable nation, the sole superpower, and the lone conscience of the world. The neoconservatives in the American establishment unabashedly call upon the US to take the lead in establishing a "benevolent

global hegemony." Robert Kagan, a neoconservative columnist, asserts that American power should be deployed to control or prevent the "rise of militant anti-American Muslim fundamentalism in North Africa and the Middle East, a rearmed Germany in a chaotic Europe, a revitalized Russia, a rearmed Japan in a scramble for power with China in a volatile East Asia." The Bush administration believes that it has the resources to bully or bribe everybody into complying with its dictates.

Islamophobia

In a special report on Islam and the West, *The Economist* described European approaches to Islam as represented by a “fundamental fear” of Muslim societies of the Middle East (*The Economist*, August 6, 1994). Willy Claes, then the Secretary General of NATO in the mid-1990s, pointed to the Islamic challenge as the major threat confronting the West. The Runnymede Trust in Britain set up a Commission on Islamophobia in 1997, which revealed that Islamophobia—fear of and hostility towards Islam and Muslims—was one of the chief forms of racism in the country. The wide prevalence of Islamophobia in Western countries is reflected in the stigmatization and demonization of Islam and Muslims, in the opposition to the visibility of Islamic symbols in public places, in the distortion and misrepresentation of matters related to Muslims by the Western media, in racial profiling and surveillance, in the opposition to immigration by the far-right political parties, and in discrimination against Muslims in respect of employment, education and housing. It is widely believed in Europe that its over 20 million Muslims pose a serious threat to the security, culture and prosperity of European societies. Islamophobia has been on the rise after 9/11.(see <http://www.eumc.eu.int>) An Amnesty International report says that nearly 87 million people in the US—nearly a quarter of the national population—are at high risk of being victimized because they belong to racial, ethnic or religious minorities. Nearly 32 million people in the US, mostly Muslims from the Middle East and South Asia, have reported that they have been racially profiled.

Nick Griffin, a leader of the far-right British National Party, said in a recent speech that Islam was a vicious, wicked faith. He was tried for incitement to racial hatred, but on February 3, 2006 walked free at the end of the trial. In his defence, Griffin argued that he was attacking a religion, not a race. Curiously, Britain and Denmark have an anti-blasphemy law, but it is applicable only to Christianity and not to other religions. Both the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party in Denmark have opposed a parliamentary move to abolish the anti-blasphemy law or to make it more inclusive. Most European countries have moved in the direction of making immigration laws and policies more stringent. In many countries the tough immigration policies and procedures betray Islamophobic tendencies. Thus the southern state of Baden-Wuttenberg in Germany has designed its own searching exam exclusively for Muslim applicants seeking German citizenship. Questions in the exam include the following: If your son told you he was a homosexual and wanted to live with another man, how would you react? If your adult daughter dressed like a German woman, would you try to prevent her from doing so?



Banner held by a Muslim protestor in the US a few days after 9/11

In September 2005 a Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten published 12 highly derogatory caricatures of Prophet Muhammad. In one of them he was shown wearing a bomb-shaped turban (thus portraying him as a terrorist). In early February 2006, several newspapers in 22 European countries republished some or all of the cartoons. The publication of these

sacrilegious cartoons generated an enormous amount of anger and resentment among Muslims across the world, which was expressed in massive protests and demonstrations and in the boycott of Danish products.

In our globalizing era, people's perceptions and judgement of other communities tend to be shaped by what they read in the newspapers and magazines and what they see on television. The global media (which are largely controlled by Western media empires such as Time Warner and Reuters) often misrepresent news and events related to Muslims which reinforces stereotypes and prejudices about Muslims. Edward Said has perceptively observed in *Covering Islam* (1997) that the coverage of Islam in the Western media or the public reactions to events in the Muslim world do not take place in a vacuum, but are nourished by a "subliminal culture consciousness" which derives its anti-Islamic attitudes from centuries of negative conditioning. Thus if the Palestinian Arabs vent their resentment and anger against the Israeli occupation of their homeland, it is described (by an American scholar of Jewish origin, Bernard Lewis, whose virulent dislike of Islam and Muslims is well-known) as the "return of Islam." Another Western scholar characterizes it as "Islamic opposition to non-Islamic peoples."

Muslims are generally portrayed by the Western media as fanatical, aggressive, bigoted, devious, debauch and as the quintessential Other. Arabs in the Middle East are perceived as a homogeneous people and painted in the darkest of colours. The Western media seems to be oblivious of the fact that there are more than 15 million Arab Christians—comprising Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant—living in the Middle East.

The wide prevalence of Islamophobia in the Western world is reflected in the currency of the term 'Islamic fundamentalism', which is indiscriminately used by the media and by writers and commentators in the West to describe Islamic movements, resistance to oppressive regimes, and assertions of religious and ethnic consciousness and identity among Muslims. Thus, struggles for self-determination by the Muslims of Central Asia have been described by Western observers as Islamic fundamentalism. The electoral results in Algeria in 1991 have been described in the Western media in terms of the reemergence of Islamic fundamentalism. The victory of Hamas in the Palestinian elections is dubbed as the triumph of Islamic fundamentalism. The massive world-wide protests over the publication of the slanderous cartoons of the Prophet in European newspapers were described as the resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism.

A distinguished American psychologist Gordon Allport has spoken of 'word fetishism'. A fetish is an object or word that elicits an uncritical, habitual response, which is often laden with certain value presuppositions. The phrase Islamic fundamentalism provides a good example of word fetishism. There is now an increasing realization, even among Western scholars, writers and policy makers, that the term Islamic fundamentalism is highly contentious, that it obfuscates rather than clarifies, that it has pejorative, disparaging connotations. In December 2005, the European Union launched an initiative to deepen ties with Muslim countries and reach out to the 20 million Muslims living in Europe. This is sought to be done by clarifying the discourse on Islam, by using the right vocabulary to steer clear of misunderstandings and misrepresentation, and by avoiding references to pejorative

terms like Islamic fundamentalism and Islamic terrorism. The emphasis is on developing a “non-emotive lexicon for public communication” related to Muslims.

Muslims in the West

No reliable statistics on the number of Muslims living in Europe and in North America are available. A 1986 estimate placed the number of Muslims in Europe at 23 million. There are more than eight million Muslims living in the US, Canada and Latin America. The experience of Muslims in Western countries and the record of Western societies in addressing their concerns and in integrating them into mainstream society present a rather mixed picture. There is no denying that, by and large, Western societies offer



Two Muslim girls greeting each other on the feast of Id al-Adha in Washington DC



Shabina Begum lost her case for the right to wear the Islamic dress in class at Denbig High School in Luton, Britain

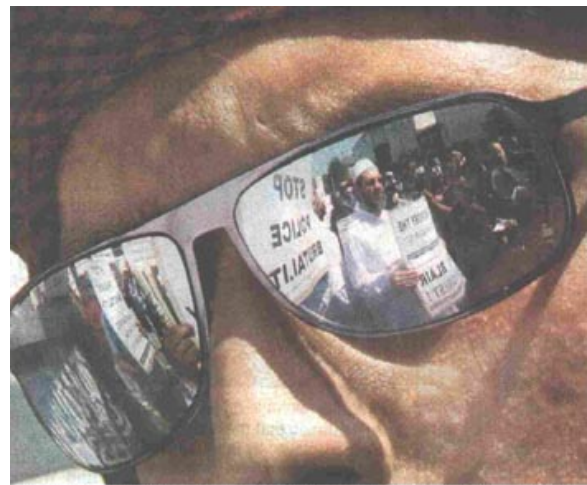
Muslims as well as other immigrants a fairly good package, comprising better economic prospects, opportunities for higher education and upward mobility, civil rights, personal autonomy, and religious and cultural freedom (which is scarce in many Muslim countries). For example, Muslims in Europe and North America can have their own mosques, burial grounds, religious schools (which are funded by the state in some countries), freedom to celebrate their feasts, freedom for Muslim women to wear the Islamic headscarf (*hijab*), and facilities for *halal* meat. As early as 1974, Belgium passed a law granting Islamic worship the same status as that accorded to the established religions in the country, namely Catholicism, Protestantism and Judaism. Nearly all European countries provide facilities for imparting instruction to the children of immigrants in their native languages.

On the other hand, Muslims in Western societies are faced with a host of problems and challenges, including xenophobia and institutionalized racism, unclear citizenship status, lack of legal security, discrimination, stigmatization and marginalization. Laws, policies and procedures in many European societies betray bias and discrimination against the immigrants and minorities. In Britain, for example, there is an avowedly colour-blind allocation of housing, which in reality is discriminatory in respect of non-whites. Similarly, tens of thousands of Anglican, Catholic and Jewish schools in Britain are funded by the state. About a quarter of all pupils in Britain attend state-funded religious schools. It was only a couple of years ago that this privilege was extended to a few (five) Muslim schools and one Sikh school. In Britain, until recently (December 2003), acts of discrimination against Muslims were not considered illegal because the courts did not recognize Muslims as an ethnic group, although Jews and Sikhs are recognized as ethnic groups. In Belgium, the

Vlaas Belang Party (which won nearly a quarter of the national vote in the 2004 election) wants to disallow the immigrants to get brides from their native countries. In Britain, the Labour government is also inclined to this view.

France swears by the republican ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity. In reality, however, Muslim immigrants from North America (including their second and third generation descendants born and brought up in France) experience widespread discrimination, exclusion and racism. French society is differentiated according to class, religion and ethnicity. Mainstream jobs and positions remain largely with the white, upper class, Christian majority. The *banlieues* (suburbs) where the majority of Muslims live, are characterized by poverty, high unemployment rate (over 30% as compared with the national average of 10%), crime and drug addiction. Faced with this gloomy situation, many French youths are forced to change their names and to conceal their local addresses for fear that the disclosure of their real identity will jeopardize their chances of getting a job. In November 2005 North African youths indulged in large-scale rioting and vandalism on the streets of Paris. The incident was triggered by the accidental death by electrocution of two of their colleagues who were being chased by the French police.

Following 9/11, the Madrid train bombing in 2004 and the terrorist attack on London in July 2005, the stigmatization and arbitrary harassment of Muslims has greatly increased in large parts of Europe and the US. Soon after the London attack, the London police erroneously executed an innocent Brazilian electrician thought to be a suicide bomber. On June 2, 2006, the London police carried out a massive pre-dawn raid, with 300 officers, on the house of two Muslim brothers in East London, on suspicion of terrorist links. One of the brothers was wounded in a shot fired by the police. The police recovered nothing which could suggest that the brothers were involved in any terrorist activities. They were later released without charge. This incident fuelled anger and resentment in the Muslim community.



A group of British Muslims protesting against the police raid on a Muslim house in East London on June 2, 2006, as reflected in the sunglasses of a protestor

There has been a good deal of discussion on the cultural rights of ethnic and religious minorities in Western societies. The discourse on the cultural rights of minorities in European societies or elsewhere may be clouded by myopia unless it is accompanied by a discussion of cultural responsibilities and obligations. The immigrants and minorities, including Muslims, are obliged not only to obey the laws of the countries where they live but also to respect local norms, cultural traditions and the sensitivities of the host society. For example, a boisterous midnight celebration or music party by African immigrants in a predominantly white locality in Austria or Switzerland is likely to disturb the sleep and peace of mind of local residents, which cannot be defended in the name of the immigrants' cultural rights. The integration of immigrants cannot be regarded as a one-sided affair nor can it be entirely left to the state or the host society. The immigrants also need to make sincere and

sustained efforts to earn the goodwill of the host society by learning the local language, by showing deference to the sensitivities of the host society, by participating in local-level voluntary action, by inviting their neighbours and other members of the host society to their homes on festive occasions, by encouraging their young children to join voluntary organizations and to participate in sports and other activities. This kind of engagement can go a long way in tearing down the walls of mistrust and separation and in building bridges of understanding and harmony with the wider society. In Germany, the Muslim Women's Training Centre (*Begegnungs-und Fortbildungszentrum Muslimischer Frauen*), founded at Cologne in 1996, carries out a wide range of activities and programmes for Muslim women, including facilities for education, training and counseling. One of the important activities of the Centre is to foster an atmosphere of understanding, dialogue and accommodation between the host society and the immigrants and to facilitate their integration.

Inter-faith dialogue

In the first half of the 20th century, social scientists and assorted intellectuals in the West confidently asserted that religion would inevitably decline in the face of forces unleashed by secular rationality and modernity. This prognostication came to be known as the secularization thesis. An eminent American sociologist Peter Berger, in an interview to *The New York Times* in 1968 confidently stated that "by the 21st century, religious believers are likely to be found only in small sects, huddled together to resist a worldwide secular culture." However, this prophecy of doom was belied by the tidal wave of ethnic and religious revival and reawakening that began to sweep across large parts of the world from the 1980s onwards and which gathered added momentum in the closing years of the 20th century. In a recent article, Berger has confessed that the secularization thesis has been falsified by the resurgence of ethnic and religious consciousness in large parts of the world, including the United States, that the project of secularization has been successful only in one small corner of the world, namely Europe. The rest of the world, he says, continues to be as fervently religious as ever. The resurgence of religious consciousness and identity across the world has a significant bearing on inter-faith dialogue.

The initiative for inter-faith dialogue in the West was taken by the Vatican and the World Council of Churches in the 1950s. A series of meetings and consultations between the representatives of Christian churches and those of other religions, including Muslims, were organized in different European cities. A major impetus to inter-faith dialogue was provided by the Second Vatican Council (1962-65). In 1964 Pope Paul VI established an Office for Non-Christian Affairs at the Vatican to study diverse religious traditions, provide resources and promote inter-religious dialogue through education. The Office for Non-Christian Affairs produced a document entitled "Orientations for a Dialogue between Christians and Muslims" in 1970. The document urged Christians to clear away the "outdated image, inherited from the past, or distorted by prejudice and slander, that Christians have of Islam." It also recognizes the "past injustice towards the Muslims for which the West, with its Christian education, is to blame." The document notes with regret that far too many Christians, brought up in an atmosphere of open hostility, are against any reflection on Islam. Carrying the spirit of dialogue and reconciliation forward, the Office for Non-

Christian Affairs in 1967 asked Christians to offer their best wishes to Muslims at the end of the month of Ramadan with “genuine religious warmth.”

On April 24, 1974, Cardinal Pignedoli, head of the Office for Non-Christian Affairs, visited Saudi Arabia and carried a message from Pope Paul VI for King Faisal. The message expressed “the regards of His Holiness, moved by a profound belief in the unification of Islamic and Christian worlds in the worship of One God”. In October 1874, a delegation of the *ulama* from Saudi Arabia visited the Vatican and was warmly received by the Pope. This meeting paved the way for a meaningful and sustainable dialogue between Christians and Muslims. The Saudi delegation was subsequently received by the Ecumenical Council of Churches of Geneva and by the Lord Bishop of Strasbourg, His Grace Elchinger. The Bishop invited the members of the delegation to join the midday prayer in his cathedral. In 1989 the Office for Non-Christian Affairs was renamed the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue.

The World Christian Council launched a programme for Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies in 1971. From the outset the focus of the programme has been on Muslim-Christian relations. A number of international and regional meetings and workshops were organized under the programme, which focused on an exchange of views and experiences related to Christian-Muslim dialogue. Christian churches in France have played a pioneering role in fostering closer ties between Christians and Muslims. France was the first European country where an Office for Relations with Islam was set up by the Catholic Church in 1973, which was followed a few years later by the establishment of a Church-Islam Commission by the Protestant churches. Several Christian umbrella organizations in the West, including the Conference of European Churches and the Council of Bishops’ Conferences in Europe, launched programmes which focused on Christian-Muslim relations in the context of Europe. The World Council of Churches in Geneva opened an office devoted to inter-faith dialogue. In Sweden (which, like Britain, has an established church), inter-faith activities are supported by the state. Under the state-sponsored programme, a Christian priest, a Jewish rabbi and a Muslim imam held public inter-faith dialogue sessions. In 1994 this group was sent on a peace mission to Sarajevo. In 1996 the Nordic Centre for Inter-Religious Dialogue was established in Stockholm. In recent years inter-faith programmes have been launched in many parts of the world. A larger forum for inter-religious dialogue is the World Parliament of Religions which has regularly been meeting in Chicago since 1993. Unesco has organized several meetings and conferences focused on the role of religion in fostering inter-cultural harmony and global peace.

A number of academic institutions, research centres and seminaries in Western countries focus on inter-faith understanding and dialogue, especially on Christian-Muslim relations. These include the Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim relations at Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham (Britain), founded in 1975, the Duncan Black Macdonald Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations at the Hartford Seminary in the US, and the Centre for Muslim-Christian Understanding established in 1993 by Georgetown University and the Foundation pour L’Entente entre Chretiens et Musulmans at Geneva. The Centre focuses on the historical, theological, political and cultural dimensions of the encounter between Islam and Christianity. The Muslim-Christian Research Group, a team of

Muslim and Christian scholars working together in Paris, has published books in French and English on issues related to Christian-Muslim relations.

Earlier, Muslims viewed the initiative taken by Jewish and Christian groups in inter-faith dialogue with suspicion and mistrust, fearing that this was a disguised attempt at proselytization. In the course of time the mist of apprehension has lifted and there is now a greater willingness on the part of Muslims to share their perceptions and experiences with the followers of other faiths. Several Islamic institutions and organizations in Europe, North America and other parts of the world have made inter-faith dialogue, especially Muslim-Christian dialogue, an important part of their programmes. The Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), based in Indiana, USA, is a national association of Muslim organizations in the United States which provides a common platform for presenting Islam, supporting Muslim communities and developing educational, social and outreach programmes, including inter-faith dialogue. The Islamic Foundation at Leicester, Britain, has an Inter-Faith Unit, which brings out an informative journal called *Encounters: Journal of Inter-Cultural Perspectives*. The Al-Bayt Foundation in Jordan, which is devoted to research on Islamic civilization, also devotes attention to Christian-Muslim relations. In Indonesia, inter-faith dialogue has been officially promoted for the past few decades. An Institute for the Study of Religious Harmony was set up in Jakarta in 1993. The State Institute of Islamic Studies in Jakarta started a journal called *Religiosa: Indonesian Journal of Religious Harmony*. In 1998 a Chair for the Study of Islam, Judaism and Christianity was created at the University of Rabat with the cooperation of Unesco.

Religion has much to offer to our troubled world. Unfortunately the creative, humanizing and liberating potential of religion has not been adequately harnessed. Religious sensibilities can be a valuable source of personal fulfillment, cultural vitality and social solidarity. The history of the resistance movement against the apartheid regime in South Africa provides an illuminating illustration of this fact. The strength of inter-religious solidarity in the resistance against apartheid played a vital role in bringing this obnoxious system to an end. African history and cultural traditions have been profoundly shaped by the interplay between three religious traditions, namely Islam, Christianity and traditional African religions.

In order to release and harness the great potential of religion, it needs to be divested of its outward trappings and reinterpreted in a humane, inclusionary and accommodative spirit and in the context of our globalizing era. The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences has issued a refreshing statement in recent times:

Asia is the womb of the great world religions. All great scriptural religions were born on Asian soil. The Church has to be in constant dialogue with the religions of Asia and to embark on this with great seriousness.....There may be more truth about God and life than it is made known to us through the Jesus of history and the Church. As such, Christians who take Christ's injunctions seriously must search for this truth in the various religions of the world.

Inter-religious dialogues are generally confined to academic and religious elites and do not touch the lives of people at the grass roots level. In order to make inter-religious dialogue

more effective and viable, it is necessary to ensure the involvement and participation of large numbers of people from diverse religious backgrounds and from different walks of life. This can be done by involving grass roots organizations, regional movements and local leadership in inter-faith dialogue.

Conclusion

There seems to be a positive correlation between the public recognition of the culture and identities of minorities, the degree of social and cultural autonomy available to them and their felt sense of self-assurance, and their integration into the wider society. A reassuring and enabling environment—free from xenophobia, mistrust and stigmatization—is likely to facilitate and strengthen their involvement with the wider society and to channel their capabilities, energies and resources in a socially productive direction. On the other hand, repressed identities are often the breeding ground of separatism, alienation and extremism. In Germany, the public recognition of ethnic and religious minorities, especially Turkish immigrants, has played a significant role in their integration into the host society. In the late 1980s, the *Ausländer Berauftragte* (The Commission on Foreigners) offered a definition of community on the basis of religion. Like churches in Germany, which are recognized as a religious community (*Religionsgesellschaft*), Muslim associations also enjoy this status in several provinces. In Hamburg, for example, language teachers, even those with Turkish nationality, are treated as civil servants.

A positive development in European societies in recent years is the growing tendency on the part of immigrants to get their grievances redressed within the legal and constitutional framework, and not in the name of minority rights. In Germany, for example, Muslims, especially German-born Muslims, are seeking the resolution of their problems from within German society. For example, the German constitution allows religious instruction in state-funded schools. The demand by German Muslims to allow Islamic teachings in schools is legitimized in the framework of this constitutional provision. Similarly, the decisions by the Supreme Administrative Courts in Germany that allow Muslim girls in some cities to be exempted from coeducational sports lessons, or the recent court decision that grants Muslims the right to slaughter animals according to their religious ritual, were informed and guided by the basic principle of freedom of religion guaranteed by the German constitution. Significantly, the courts in Germany, as well as other European countries, are playing a highly important role in granting legal recognition to the religious and cultural rights of immigrants and minorities. In the Netherlands, the Committee for Equal Treatment, a state institution which has been created to deal with the issue of discrimination on grounds of race, gender or conviction, has recently ruled in favour of a Muslim woman whose registration in a teacher training programme was cancelled because she refused to shake hand with a male teacher on religious grounds. Taking recourse to the legal and constitutional path, coupled with negotiation and dialogue, will go a long way not only in securing public recognition for the legitimate rights of Muslims and other minorities but also in drawing them closer to the host society and thereby facilitating their integration in the host society.

Islam and Social Justice

IOS Research Network

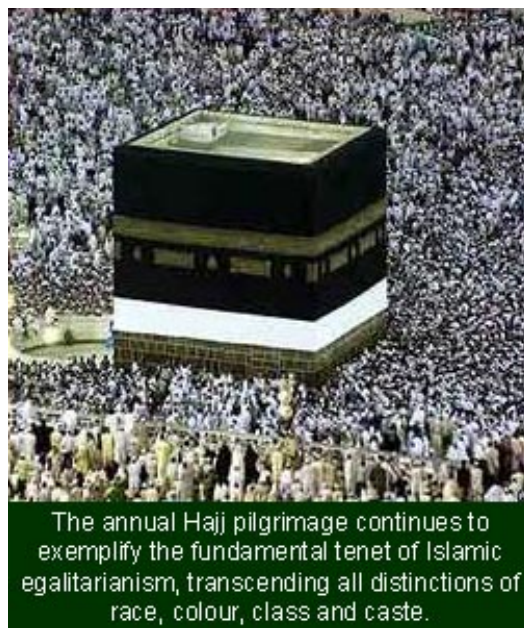
Egalitarianism, universal brotherhood of humanity and social justice form the bedrock of the social structure of Islam. These cardinal principles are embedded in the Islamic world-view. It is therefore profitable to examine the nature, scope and significance of the concept of social justice in the larger context of the Islamic world-view.

The Islamic world-view

Islam is not a racial or parochial religion, confined to a particular race or people or to a given period of history. It is universal in its message and appeal. The universality of the Islamic faith is reflected in its view of prophecy as well as in its attitude towards other religions. According to the Islamic belief, prophets and divine messengers have been sent to all people in every part of the world (Quran 16:36). Muslims are required to believe in not only the prophecy of Muhammad (SAW) but also that of all other prophets who carried the divine message at different points of time.

In the Islamic view, God is transcendent, but not as an external despot, high in the skies, who is unconcerned about man's fate. The Quran says that God is closer to man than the artery of his neck. He is the most compassionate, the most merciful. He is not a parochial deity but the Lord of the universe and of all humankind.

According to the Islamic view, man is not the product of a blind process of evolution, but a being who has been created by God with His own hands. All humans, according to the Islamic view, are born innocent, untainted by original sin or guilt. Man has been endowed with self-consciousness, reason and moral choice. The Quran describes man as God's vicegerent on earth (2:30; 6:165). In the Islamic view, human nature is characterised by a certain duality or polarity. On the one hand, man is said to have been created from clay, a lowly substance (Quran 23:12; 32:7). On the other hand, God has breathed His soul into him (Quran 15:29). Furthermore, man has been endowed with the capacity and freedom to choose between good and evil (Quran (76:3; 90:8-10). Thus, man possesses two rather contradictory kinds of potentialities: benign and sublime, on the one hand, and vicious and demonic, on the other. In the Islamic view, the relationship between the individual and society is one of complementarity. Islam avoids the extremes of both exaggerated individualism and communitarian totalitarianism.



The annual Hajj pilgrimage continues to exemplify the fundamental tenet of Islamic egalitarianism, transcending all distinctions of race, colour, class and caste.

The Islamic conception of human nature avoids the fallacies of romanticism, cynicism and determinism. It takes due cognisance of the existence of evil and viciousness and says that it is embedded in the structure of the human psyche. At the same time, it emphasizes that man has the capacity and freedom to overcome his organismic frailties and limitations and to actualize his benign potentialities. It underscores the unfolding and development of the benign, angelic qualities inherent in human nature. As God's vicegerent on earth, man is accountable to his Creator for all his actions. Though the world and all its bounties have been created for man, he is required to use the God-given resources prudently and in moderation. The Islamic principle of moral accountability provides a corrective to the wasteful consumption of resources.

The Islamic ethos covers all spheres of human life, both temporal and spiritual. Islam makes no differentiation between what is God's and what is Caesar's, between the external world and the internal world. It does not posit a rigid duality between the sacred and the profane. The Islamic faith avoids the extremes of renunciation and self-abnegation, on the one hand, and excessive self-indulgence, on the other. It underscores the value of balance and moderation.

Egalitarianism

The unity, equality and brotherhood of mankind, regardless of the distinctions of birth, class or caste, are among the cardinal principles of the Islamic faith. The universal appeal of these principles has drawn and continues to draw hundreds of thousands of people from diverse ethnic and social backgrounds across the world to the fold of Islam. In spite of occasional deviations from the ideal, the principle of egalitarianism has remained a beacon of inspiration for generations of Muslims across the world.

According to the Islamic view, all human have been created from a single primordial pair (Quran 49:13) and are therefore equal. In the Islamic view, the distinctions of birth, lineage, class, wealth or caste are inconsequential. The only worthwhile distinction or honour is piety and moral virtue. Thus the Quran says: "O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, so that you may know each other. Verily the most honoured amongst you in the sight of God is the one who is the most righteous of you" (Quran 49:13). In his sermon during the Last Pilgrimage, the Prophet declared: "O people! Verily your Lord is One and your father (Adam) was one. Verily an Arab is not superior to a non-Arab nor is a red-skinned person superior to a dark-skinned

<p>The Islamic conception of human nature avoids the fallacies of romanticism, cynicism and determinism. It takes due cognisance of the existence of evil and viciousness and says that it is embedded in the structure of the human psyche. At the same time, it emphasizes that man has the capacity and freedom to overcome his organismic frailties and limitations and to actualize his benign potentialities. It underscores the unfolding and development of the benign, angelic qualities inherent in human nature.</p>
--

person, nor is a dark-sinned person superior to a red-skinned person, except in respect of piety and righteousness. All Muslims are brothers unto each other.”

One of the priceless gifts of Islamic civilization to humankind is that it flung open the doors of knowledge and learning to all and sundry, men and women, rich and poor, high and low. This revolutionary democratisation of knowledge served as a great social leveller. Slaves and their descendants as well as people of humble social and occupational background emerged as touch bearers of learning and scholarship.

The Islamic view of economic and human resources

According to the Islamic view, all resources have been created by God for the sake and humans (Quran 31:20; 57:7). These resources are for the benefit of all mankind and not for just a few individuals, families or groups (Quran 2:29). Man is therefore urged to partake of God-given resources (7:32; 28:77). Livelihood is described in the Quran as God’s bounty (Quran 2:198; 5:4; 17:66; 28:2; 62:10). The Prophet is reported to have said: “Seek for your family legitimate means of livelihood, for this is a *jihad* (holy war) in the cause of God.” The Prophet condemned indolence, dependency and beggary and emphasized that one should earn his livelihood through his own effort. One of the comprehensive prayers in the Quran says. “Our Lord! Give us what is good in this world and in the Hereafter” (Quran 2:201).

Islam is not against the ownership of private property or the accumulation of wealth. Nevertheless, the whole range of economic activities from agriculture to trade and commerce is subjected to two basic conditions. First, one should employ legitimate means in earning one’s livelihood. Trade and other economic or commercial activities and transactions are subjected to a system of moral checks and balances. All unethical means of acquiring wealth, including unfair trading practices, bribery, hoarding, black marketing and usury, are strictly forbidden. Second, being the vicegerent of God, man is required to act as the trustee of economic resources. He should neither squander them in an unbridled manner nor use them as a means of exercising control and domination over others. The Islamic tradition is highly critical of ostentation and conspicuous or wasteful consumption (Quran 9:35; 17:26; 25:67). Imam Abu Hanifa, one of the greatest jurists of the first century of the Islamic era, is reported to have said that even if one were having a wash by the river Tigris he should be economical in the use of water.

Karl Polanyi has argued that one major pitfall of classical and neo-classical economic theory is that they regard the economy as an autonomous, self-regulating domain. In actual practice,

One of the priceless gifts of Islamic civilization to humankind is that it flung open the doors of knowledge and learning to all and sundry, men and women, rich and poor, high and low. This revolutionary democratisation of knowledge served as a great social leveller. Slaves and their descendants as well as people of humble social and occupational background emerged as touch bearers of learning and scholarship.

however, economic processes are always regulated by social relations and moral values. Islam takes due cognizance of this reality and subjects economic activities to a system of moral checks and balances. In Islamic perspective, ethics and economics are indissociable. It is note-worthy that the bearing of ethnical norms on economic activities and economic behaviour is now increasingly recognised by eminent economists like Amartya Sen.

Islam is against the concentration of wealth in a few individuals or families (Quran 59:7). The Islamic economy is guided by the concept of human well-being (*falah*), which entails the sharing of available resources, fellow-feeling, social justice and philanthropy. The Islamic ethos of social justice is reflected in the Prophetic tradition: "Take wealth from the rich and turn it over to the poor." The Quran says that the needy and the dispossessed have a rightful share in the possessions of the rich (Quran 70:25). In the Islamic view, poverty and destitution result largely from the inequitable distribution of resources and the concentration of wealth in the hand of a few. In addition to the emphasis placed on charity and philanthropy, two important mechanisms facilitate the process of social justice in Islamic society: an obligatory tax on well-to-do Muslims, and the law of inheritance. The rate of the obligatory tax (*zakah*) varies according to the nature of the economic resources one possesses.

The Islamic law of inheritance stipulates that after death the assets and property of the deceased should be distributed among his heir and the nearest relatives. A person can bequeath only one-third of his property to any one he likes. The purpose of this provision is to ensure that he does not give away all of his wealth, through testamentary will, to some one according to his whims, leaving his legitimate heirs and descendants destitute.

Charity and philanthropy

The Islamic tradition places a great deal of emphasis on compassion, altruism, sacrifice and charity. The Quran urges Muslims to spend on the poor and the needy (Quran 2:195, 219, 254, 264, 267, 274; 3:92; 14:31; 57:10-11; 76:8, 9). The Prophet is reported to have said: "All humankind is (like) the family of God and the dearest of them in the sight of God is the one who is the most kind and beneficial to God's family."

He also said that a person who renders (some) service to widows and the poor is equal to one who is engaged in *jihad* in the path of God or to one who spends the whole day in fasting and the whole night in prayers. He warned that a Muslim who eats to his heart's

Karl Polanyi has argued that one major pitfall of classical and neo-classical economic theory is that they regard the economy as an autonomous, self-regulating domain. In actual practice, however, economic processes are always regulated by social relations and moral values. Islam takes due cognizance of this reality and subjects economic activities to a system of moral checks and balances. In Islamic perspective, ethics and economics are indissociable. It is note-worthy that the bearing of ethnical norms on economic activities and economic behaviour is now increasingly recognised by eminent economists like Amartya Sen.

content while his neighbour keeps hungry is not a true believer. A significant aspect of the concept of social justice and egalitarianism in Islam relates to the humane treatment of slaves and their emancipation. The institution of slavery, which was widespread in pre-Islamic Arabia, was temporarily continued with a view to provide security and succour to prisoners of war. The Prophet exhorted Muslims to deal with slaves in the most humane manner and to treat them like one's family in respect of food, clothes and education. Islam sought the gradual eradication of slavery. The Quran says that liberating a slave is the best form of charity (Quran 90:11). A large number of slaves were set free by the Prophet and his Companions. According to Islamic law, a freed slave and a freeborn are equal in status. The Prophet got his cousin Zynab married to his freed slave Zayd ibn Haritha. Islamic law stipulates that a slave has the right to purchase his freedom by paying some compensation to his master.

The institutionalisation of social justice

In Islamic society, social justice is institutionalised under the auspices of the state, an independent judiciary, and a comprehensive system of endowment (*Waqf*). The Islamic state, especially through the state treasury (*Bayt al-mal*), became a key instrument of social justice and public welfare. During the caliphate of Umar, the state treasury was greatly expanded and became a great source of sustenance and security for substantial numbers of poor and destitute people. The state treasury played a multiplicity of roles in Islamic society, including offering financial support to the needy, the disabled and the deprived sections of society, advancement of loans to the needy and the repayment of their debts, rehabilitation of victims of natural calamities, providing stipends to different categories of people, providing care and support to children who have no parents or relatives to take care of them, subsidies to peasants and cultivators to improve the means of cultivation, construction of canals, roads and bridges, and the management of public hospitals.

In Islamic society, the judiciary is independent of the ruling dispensation. The judge (*qadi*) is required to implement the provisions of Islamic law (*shariah*) without fear or favour and in the discharge of his obligations he is accountable, not to the powers that be, but only to God. An independent judiciary played a crucial role in ensuring compliance with Islamic law on the part of the ruling establishment as well as the general public.

In Islamic society, the judiciary is independent of the ruling dispensation. The judge (*qadi*) is required to implement the provisions of Islamic law (*shariah*) without fear or favour and in the discharge of his obligations he is accountable, not to the powers that be, but only to God. An independent judiciary played a crucial role in ensuring compliance with Islamic law on the part of the ruling establishment as well as the general public.

Gender justice

An important dimension of social justice is gender justice. Islam has made a note-worthy contribution to gender justice. Islam strictly prohibited the pagan practices of female infanticide and child sacrifice. The Prophet described the birth of a female child as a sign of divine mercy and blessing. The honourable status of women in Islam is attested by a saying of the Prophet: “The word is an ephemeral thing, of which one takes temporary advantage; and among the things of his world nothing is better than a good, virtuous woman.” He exhorted Muslims to be kind and considerate towards their wives. He declared: “The best amongst you is the one who is the most kind and considerate towards his wife.” In an age when women’s rights were virtually non-existent, Muslim women were given full rights to acquire, inherit and dispose of personal property without let or hindrance from relatives, including the husband.

The institution of *Waqf* (endowment of property for charitable purposes) played a highly important role in translating the ideal of social justice into reality. It was first instituted by the Prophet, who dedicated seven gardens of date palm for public welfare. The institution of *Waqf* had a profound and far-reaching impact on charitable activities and the promotion of learning in the Islamic world. A wide variety of charitable activities, including the establishment of public hospitals, asylums, libraries and caravanserais, children’s education, care and rehabilitation of physically disabled people, and the provision of regular stipends for the poor and the destitute, were carried out under the auspices of the institution of *Waqf*. In the medieval period, a wide network of large and well-equipped charitable hospitals, including mobile medical units, existed in all cities and towns of the Islamic world from North Africa to Turkey and from Andalusia to India. Their expenses were met from public endowments. It is interesting to note that institutions of higher learning in medieval Europe borrowed the Islamic institution of *Waqf*. The earliest colleges in Europe were founded and supported by foundations and charitable trusts.

Social justice and non-Muslims

The concept of social justice in Islam is inclusive rather than exclusive, in the sense that it does not exclude the non-Muslim citizens of the Islamic state from its purview.

The attitude and behaviour of Prophet Muhammad towards the beliefs and traditions of the followers of other religions exhibited exemplary tolerance, understanding and magnanimity. When he set up a city-state at Madina, he drew up its constitution, which was committed to writing at his instance. This constitution included two significant passages: first, Muslims would have their religion and the Jews would be entitled to their religion; secondly, Muslims and Jews would together constitute a community. This covenant was extended, at a later date, to the Christians of Najran and the pagan Arabs. Thus the *Pax Islamica* included not only Muslims but also Jews, Christians and the pagan Arabs, and guaranteed to them religious, cultural, and judicial autonomy. In fact the Islamic state assumed responsibility for the maintenance and even defence of Jewish, Christian and pagan identities. The charter of rights and assurances issued to the Christian population of Najran by the Prophet included the following passage:

An assurance is hereby extended, on behalf of God and the Prophet, to the people of Najran, that their lives, religion, lands and wealth will be protected. No change in their existing conditions will be effected. Their rights will not be violated. Their commercial caravans and delegations will be protected. No cardinal will be dismissed from his position, nor will an ascetic be denied the right to his way of life. The custodians of churches will face no interference in respect of their functions.

The protection of minority rights under the Islamic dispensation has no parallel in the annals of history. The Prophet exhorted his followers to scrupulously protect the legitimate rights and privileges of the *dhimmis* (non-Muslim subjects of the Islamic state).

The attitude of tolerance and sympathy was continued by the four caliphs and the Companions. It is remarkable that the occupation of Syria by the Muslim army during the caliphate of Abu Bakr met with no resistance from the local Christian population who welcomed the Muslim soldiers not as invaders but as liberators. During the caliphate of Umar, some Muslims usurped a piece of land belonging to a Jew and constructed a mosque on the site. When the Caliph got to know about it he ordered the demolition of the mosque and the restoration of the land to the Jew. During the caliphate of Ali, the Muslim-occupied territories of the Byzantine Empire faced internal strife. Emperor Constantine II sent a secret message to the Christian population in the Islamic state, urging them to rise in revolt against Islamic rule and assuring them of his military support. The Christians, however, spurned the offer, saying: 'These enemies of our religion are preferable to you.'

Islam does not favour the forced assimilation or conversion of non-Muslims (Quran 2:256; 109:6). The Islamic state guaranteed not only the protection of the lives and honour of the *dhimmis* but also of their religious beliefs and rituals, personal laws and endowments. When Amr ibn al-As, a distinguished companion of the Prophet, conquered Egypt in 640 AD, he left the Christian population in undisturbed possession of their churches and guaranteed to them independence and autonomy in all ecclesiastical matters. He allowed the properties and endowments attached to Christian churches to remain with the Christian custodians.

After the conquest of Jerusalem, Caliph Umar gave the following assurance, in writing, to the Christian population of the town: "This is the assurance which Umar, the servant of God, the commander of the faithful, grants to the people of Aelia. He grants to all security for their lives, their possessions, their churches and their crosses, and for all that concerns their religion. Their churches shall not be converted into dwelling places, nor destroyed, nor shall

During the caliphate of Uthman, Jeserjah, the bishop of Merv, wrote a letter to the Patriarch of Persia, saying that the Arabs, whom God has given dominion over the world, do not attack Christianity. On the contrary, they help our religion, respect our priests and shrines, and offer donations to our churches and monasteries.

any constraint be put upon them in the matter of their faith.” During his caliphate, some Muslims usurped a piece of land belonging to a Jew and constructed a mosque on the site. When the Caliph got to know about the incident, he ordered the demolition of the mosque and the restoration of the land to the Jew.

Under the Islamic dispensation, non-Muslims were entitled to preserve and maintain their places of worship and to construct new ones. In some cases, the expenses for the maintenance and repair of their places of worship were met from the state treasury. Similarly, the salaries of Jewish rabbis and Christian priests were often paid from the state treasury. During the caliphate of Uthman, Jeserjah, the bishop of Merv, wrote a letter to the Patriarch of Persia, saying that the Arabs, whom God has given dominion over the world, do not attack Christianity. On the contrary, they help our religion, respect our priests and shrines, and offer donations to our churches and monasteries.

GLOBESCAN

Comments on current events, trends, issues
Professor A. R. Momin

Discontents of affluence

Prosperity and affluence does not seem to be an unmixed blessing. It is often accompanied by pride, stress, competitiveness, and low levels of happiness and contentment. In his celebrated work *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, the eminent German sociologist Max Weber observed that wherever riches have increased, the essence of religion has decreased in the same proportion. As riches increase, so will pride, anger and love of the world in all its branches. The London-based Henley Centre brought out a report in 2002 called *The Paradox of Prosperity*, which says that though overall living standards in the West will rise by 35% in the next few years, this will be accompanied by longer working hours as well as growing competitiveness and stress. This is likely to take a heavy toll of people's social and psychological health and well being.

A recent incident vividly brings out the discontents of prosperity. A blue-collar worker in Kentucky, United States, Mack Metcalf and his second wife Merida, won a \$34 million lottery jackpot in 2000. He bought a large estate and built a mansion overlooking the Ohio river and stocked it with horses and luxury cars. But his happiness proved to be short-lived. Metcalf's first wife sued him for \$31000 in unpaid child support. One of his former girl friends cheated him of \$500,000 while he was drunk. In despair he took to heavy drinking. In 2001 he divorced his wife. Merida got into drugs. One day, her boy friend died of a drug overdose. In 2003, just three years after winning the jackpot, Metcalf died due to alcohol-linked illness at the age of 45. A few days later, Merida's decomposed body was found in her bed.

James Montier, a highly rated global equity strategist from London, has been studying the psychology of investing for many years. He says that material possessions do not make a person happy. He tells his stockbroker clients that the road to happiness lies not in the pursuit of material wealth, such as limousines, mansions and other trappings of luxury, but through meditation, new experiences, friendships and adventures. He declares that "evidence shows that people who have more materialistic goals are less happy than those who focus on intrinsic values such as relationships and personal growth."

Research conducted over many years indicates that there is no necessary correlation between affluence and happiness. Princeton University's Nobel Prize winner Daniel Kahneman and his associates found that people with higher incomes spend more time in activities that are associated with negative feelings, such as tension and stress. They were more often in moods that they described as hostile, angry, anxious and tense.

Tal Ben-Shahar, a former soldier in Israel's IDF Aircraft Unit, offers a hugely popular course called Psychology 1504 at Harvard University, which focuses on the pursuit of happiness. He points out that as material wealth worldwide has risen, so have levels of depression.

Beyond basic needs, he says, money does not contribute significantly to happiness. Happiness, according to him, is mostly dependent on our state of mind, not on our status or the state of our bank account.

The Holy Quran alludes to the transience of worldly life and of material possessions in an evocative metaphor. It says: “Know that the life of this world is only play, and idle talk, and ostentation, and boasting among you, and competition and rivalry in respect of wealth and children; as the likeness of vegetation after the rain, whereof the growth is pleasing to the farmer, but afterwards it dries up and you see it turning yellow, then it is reduced to straw” (57:20). The Prophet is reported to have said: Contentment has nothing to do with the abundance of material possessions. Rather, it comes from within oneself. He is also reported to have said: “Verily, by God! I am not apprehensive about you being faced with poverty and destitution. Rather, I am afraid that the (bounties of the) would be spread out for you the way they were spread out for those who went before you and that you might get too enamoured of it the way they did, and that (in consequence of it) it might destroy you the way it destroyed them.”

Drinking: Life's bane

Drinking has been a part of everyday life in Western societies for centuries. However, drinking in excess and alcoholism have always been disapproved. With the decline of religious and moral values, the disintegration of social institutions, the prevailing atmosphere of permissiveness and the easy availability of cheap liquor, the old inhibitions and taboos



related to excess drinking—binge drinking as it is now known—are disappearing. In fact, binge drinking has become quite fashionable among young boys and girls, and even children, in many Western societies. In the UK, nearly six million people are believed to be binge drinkers.

Excess drinking is taking a heavy toll of people, especially youngsters. Since 1997 there has been a 30% rise in hospital admissions due to heavy drinking. In 2004-05, more than 51000 people aged 18 and over were treated in British hospitals for problems related to binge drinking.

Around 140 people, including 13 children, are admitted to British hospitals every day for heavy drinking. Alcohol abuse is linked to serious ailments, including cirrhosis of the liver, stomach ulcers and damage to oesophagus and the brain. More than 20,000 die each year in Britain from alcohol-related causes. Alcohol-related deaths have soared by 20% in Britain in the past five years. Studies show that one in five heavy drinkers develops cirrhosis of the liver.

The latest report about the extent of binge drinking in Britain says that young women are out-drinking men. This has resulted in an early onset of liver disease in women habituated to binge drinking. Professor Moira Plant of Briton's Bristol University points out that there are now young women in their late teens or early 20s developing liver damage that in the past was not seen until the age of 60 or 70. She warned that if young women in Britain continued to drink in this way, they could create problems for the health services in the future.

The earlier view that a little alcohol is beneficial for health is now being reconsidered and doubted. Rod Jackson, a British specialist who led the latest study on the consequences of even modest consumption of alcohol, has pointed out in an article in the British medical journal *Lancet* that any benefit from light to moderate drinking is probably small and is unlikely to outweigh the harm caused by alcohol.

More than fourteen centuries ago, the Holy Quran forbade the drinking of alcohol, even in the smallest of quantity, declaring that its disadvantages and harmful effects far outweigh its benefits. The celebrated British historian Arnold J. Toynbee once observed that one of the most valuable and lasting gifts of Islam to humanity is the prohibition of alcohol.

The woes of asceticism

International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), started by an Indian businessman turned preacher Abhay Chran De in the 1960s, became one of the most popular alternative religious and spiritual movements in Western countries. It now has more than a million followers worldwide, including such notables as the heir of the legendary Ford family and the Beatle George Harrison. In Russia, the society has nearly 100,000 white, Slav members. The members of ISKCON are expected to observe celibacy.

Recently, a US court has ordered the society to pay \$9.5 million in damages to about 450 victims of physical and sexual abuse at its boarding schools in the US and India. The society has admitted the abuse. An ISKCON teacher who is one of the accused has directly blamed the requirement of celibacy for his perversions.

Islam disallows celibacy as it considers it unnatural. The Quran says: "It is they who invented monasticism--We did not ordain it for them--only seeking God's pleasure, and they did not observe it (monasticism) according to its requirements" (57:27). The Prophet is reported to have said: "There is no place for asceticism in Islam".

Looking for a Bill Gates in the Muslim world

One of the distinctive features of the present era is the incredible, unprecedented increase in the prosperity and affluence of individuals, families, corporations and countries. According to *Forbes* magazine's rich list for 2005/2006, there are now 793 billionaires in the world (worth a combined \$52.6 trillion), spread over 49 countries. Millionaires (people with investible assets of at least \$1 million) now number 8.3 million worldwide.

What is even more remarkable—and pleasantly surprising—is that institutionalized charity and philanthropy is steadily on the rise. Thus in the United States the number of private charitable foundations has risen from about 22,000 in the early 1980s to over 65,000 today. The amount spent on charities in the US exceeds \$300 billion a year, over 2% of the country's GDP. Religious charity accounts for nearly 62% of all public donations.

In recent years the greatest contribution to public charity and philanthropy has been made by Bill Gates, the founder of Microsoft and the world's richest man. He set up the Melinda and Bill Gates Foundation a few years ago, which gives money for health, reducing poverty and destitution, and increasing access to technology in the developing countries. Bill Gates has already contributed \$31 billion to the Foundation. The Foundation spent nearly \$1.36 billion in 2005. It has financed, to the tune of \$300 million, R and D to combat malaria, AIDS and other dreadful diseases in Africa and Asia. The Foundation has recently given a grant of \$4.2 billion to One World Health, a non-profit pharmaceutical company, to start Phase III clinical trials for using paromomycin for the treatment of kala-azar (which kills nearly one hundred thousand people a year in the state of Bihar alone). By the end of his life, Bill Gates intends to have handed over most of his fortune—estimated at \$46.5 billion—to the Melinda and Bill Gates Foundation.



The example set by Bill Gates has inspired other businessmen and industrialists in the US as well as in other countries. Thus, Warren Buffett, the world's second richest man (with assets of \$42 billion), announced on May 25, 2006 that he would be contributing about \$1.5 billion every year to the Melinda and Bill Gates Foundation. Buffett said that he planned to give away about \$37 billion (nearly 85% of his fortunes) to charity. Interestingly, he once remarked that "I want to give my kids enough so that they could feel that they could do anything, but not so much that they could do nothing."

Pierre Omidyar, the founder of e-Bay, the world's largest online trading portal, and Jeff Skoll, the trading site's first chief executive, have given away millions of dollars in charity to make "the world a better place." When Sergey Brin and Larry Page, the founders of Google, made their company public, they announced that a part of the search engine's equity and profits would go to Google.org, a philanthropic organization.

Inspired by Bill Gates and Warren Buffett, Jackie Chan, the celebrated Hollywood star, announced on May 28, 2006 that he would bequeath half of his fortune to charity. *Forbes* magazine named Jackie Chan one of the world's ten generous celebrities.

The Islamic tradition places a great deal of emphasis on generosity, charity and philanthropy. The Quran says that the dispossessed and the needy have a legitimate share in the resources of the rich (70:25). In other words, acts of charity should not be vitiated by a condescending attitude towards the poor. One should not feel that one is doing a favour to a poor man by

doling out a few coins to him. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is reported to have said that a person who renders service to widows and the poor is equal to one who is engaged in holy war (*jihad*) in the path of God or to one who spends the day in fasting and the night in prayers.

Islam channelised charity and philanthropy in two inter-related directions: individual actions, and through the agency of *zakah* and *waqf* (charitable endowment). The institution of *waqf* was started by the Prophet, who dedicated seven gardens of date palm for charitable purposes. Inspired by the exhortation in the Quran that one should give away money as well as land in the way of God and by the precepts of the Prophet, many of his Companions



Al-Azhar University

donated agricultural land and gardens as *waqf*. Caliph Umar set up the institution of *bayt al-mal* (public treasury), which served as a key agency for providing financial assistance to the poor and destitute, widows, orphans, wayfarers and other disadvantaged sections of society.

The institution of *waqf* had a profound and far-reaching impact on the course of Islamic civilization. Large endowments instituted by Muslim rulers and members of the nobility supported a wide range of institutions, including mosques, madrasas, public libraries, caravanserais, universities and hospitals. The famed Al-Azhar

University in Cairo, founded in 972, was financed by revenues which accrued from *waqf* properties. The institution of *waqf* has been a highly significant and inseparable part of Muslim societies throughout Islamic history. In the early decades of the 19th century, *waqf* land comprised 570,000 acres (over 20%) out of a total of 2.375 million acres in Egypt. In 1841 the number of lots of *waqf* land in Algiers (Algeria), whose revenues were assigned for the maintenance of the city's grand mosque, was 543. In Turkey about one-third of the country's total land was committed to *waqf* at the turn of the 20th century. The Indian subcontinent has hundreds of thousands of institutions which are supported by *waqf* properties.

In *Forbes* magazine's rich list of 2005/2006 there are 45 Muslim billionaires. The following table provides an over-view of the country-wide distribution of Muslim billionaires.

Turkey	15
Saudi Arabia	11
Kuwait	4
United Arab Republic	4
Egypt	2
Lebanon	2
India	2

Kazakhstan	1
Russia	1
UK	1
USA	1
Switzerland	1
<hr/>	
Total	45

Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Al-Saud (from Saudi Arabia), with assets worth \$20 billion, figures among the first ten billionaires. Prince Alwaleed regularly gives substantial donations for charitable and Islamic causes. In December 2005 he gave \$20 million to the universities of Harvard and Georgetown to expand their Islamic studies departments.



Some of the Muslim countries have invaluable natural resources. There are 18 major oil-producing countries in the world, of which ten are Muslim, which produce nearly 40% of the world's oil. Unfortunately, most of the oil revenue goes into the personal accounts of the ruling elite or into defence expenditure. It cannot be gainsaid that Muslim kings and the aristocracy contribute substantially to charitable causes, but the quantum of such donations leaves much to be desired. Some of the worst problems facing the Muslim *ummah* include poverty and destitution, malnutrition and disease, extremely low levels of literacy (especially female literacy), lack of access to the basic necessities of life, and high unemployment rates. The *Arab Human Development Report 2002* revealed that one in five Arabs—20% of the Arab population—still lives on less than \$2 a day. The situation in the rest of the Muslim world is not substantially different. The Muslim world desperately needs a Bill Gates and others of his kind.

Ayaan Hirsi Ali: Wages of sacrilege

The present era has produced a miniscule breed of Muslim intellectuals and writers—such as Salman Rushdie, Taslima Nasreen, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Chahla Chafiq—who are overawed by the West and who take immense delight in disowning and disparaging their own religious and cultural heritage. Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* exemplifies their mindset.

Born in 1967 in Mogadishu (Somalia), Ayaan Hirsi Ali came to the Netherlands as a refugee in 1992. Soon after graduating in political science she joined the far-right People's Party for Freedom and Democracy. In 2003 she was elected to the Dutch parliament. Soon she became famous for her radical views and damning statements about Islam and the Muslim community in the Netherlands. She publicly declared that she was no longer a Muslim or a believer and argued that the "major aspects of Islamic doctrine and tradition are incompatible with an open society and with women's emancipation". In one of her interviews Hirsi Ali said that she considers the Islam of the Quran and of the Prophet as a threat to life. She was eagerly lapped up by the Dutch media and the far-right politicians.

Following the worldwide protests and demonstrations by Muslims over the publication of the slanderous cartoons of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Salman Rushdie, Taslima Nasreen and the Iranian rebel writer Chahla Chafiq issued a statement which condemned the protests and said that “after having overcome fascism, Nazism and Stalinism, the world now faces a new global threat: Islamism.”

A Dutch film maker Theo van Gogh made a film called *Submission*, which was aired on Dutch television in the summer of 2004. The script of the film was written by Hirsi Ali. The film opens with a prayer and then presents, through Hirsi Ali’s voice-over, the stories of four Muslim women telling God about the abuse (including incestuous rape) they have suffered at the hands of men. The film shows semi-nude images of women with verses from the Quran inscribed on their naked bodies. The film quite explicitly conveys the message that Islam has nothing positive to offer to women, that the abuse and humiliation of women by Muslim men is legitimized by the Quran. Understandably, the film created a great deal of anger and resentment among Muslims in the Netherlands. The Dutch media tried to sensationalise the issue by posing provocative questions to Muslim leaders, but they responded with restraint. There was no move to get the film banned. On November 2, 2004, Mohammed, a Dutch citizen of Moroccan descent, stabbed Theo van Gogh to death. After the murder of her mentor Hirsi Ali went into hiding.

The latest news, as reported by *The Economist* (May 20, 2006) is that the Dutch authorities recently found that Hirsi Ali had told lies about her name and age and had given a fabricated story to justify her application for asylum in the Netherlands in 1992. Consequently, on May 16 her Dutch citizenship was cancelled, following which she had to resign from parliament. Last month, a court ordered her to leave her apartment on the complaint of neighbours who feared for their own safety. She had to leave the Netherlands for the US—disgraced and humiliated.

The Quran says: “A person whom God scorneth, there is none to give him (or her) honour” (22:18).

The decline of marriage in the West

The Economist (London) reported on April 1, 2006 that in Britain a fifth of all people aged 25 to 34 now live with a partner outside wedlock. Perturbed by the rapid disintegration of marriage and family, Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury, told leading politicians that saving marriage was a “life and death matter.”

The decline and disintegration of marriage in Western countries is not a sudden phenomenon; it has been in progression over the past few decades. A set of interrelated factors, including the growing sense of individualism and self-gratification, the steadily loosening hold of religious and moral values, changes in sexual mores and the accelerated pace of social change, have contributed to the steady decline of marriage in Western societies. The available survey data indicate that remaining single, living together outside marriage, births out of wedlock and rising divorce rates are becoming increasingly common in almost all Western countries. The reasons for remaining single, especially among women,

include individualism, sexual freedom, freedom of lifestyle, and the growing financial independence of women.

A survey of marriage in more than 30 European countries revealed that living together without marriage is becoming the norm rather than the exception in most European countries. In Sweden, for example, more than one-fourth of all couples are living together outside marriage. Nearly half of all babies in Sweden are born to unwed mothers. In Britain, as in other European countries, living together without marriage is becoming increasingly common. It is estimated that in the next few years four out of five married couples in Britain would live together before marriage. In Britain nearly one-third of all births are out of wedlock. It is estimated that more than half of all babies in the country will be born to unwed mothers or couples who are cohabiting outside marriage by 2012. In 1980 only 12% of babies in Britain were born to unmarried mothers. Figures published by the Office for National Statistics show that in 2004 four out of ten babies were born to unmarried mothers. Denmark, Sweden and Finland have even higher figures. In the United States 33% of all births in 2002 occurred to unmarried women.

In addition to the increasing incidence of cohabitation outside marriage, another disturbing trend is what has come to be known as voluntary childlessness. In recent years there has come about a radical shift in the perception about children in Western countries. There is a growing belief among young women and men that not having children is the ideal way of life. Their increasing preoccupation with unbounded freedom, self-fulfillment and career advancement, coupled with work and financial pressures, keeps them away from having children. A recent study conducted by the Federal Institute for Demographic Research in Germany shows that 26% of men and 15% of women aged between 20 and 39 do not want to start a family. Fifty per cent of university-educated women of child-bearing age in Germany prefer not having children. In the 1990s nearly 60% of women aged between 25 and 29 in Germany had a baby. The figure has plunged to 29% in 2005. In Britain a recent report of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys predicted that 20% of women born between 1960 and 1990 will remain without a child. In the US 20% of women in their 30s are expected to remain without a child.

A culture of voluntary childlessness seems to be emerging in many Western countries as well as in Australasia. In Britain there is a growing market for books such as *Child-Free and Loving It*. Honda is now designing cars that will replace child seats with dog crates. In Australia, childless couples constitute the fastest growing type of household. In many restaurants in Rome children are not welcome.

Demographers point out that in order to maintain the population at its present level, a fertility rate of 2.1 births per woman—known as the total fertility rate—is required. The growing tendency in Western countries to remain childless or to have just one baby has led to a steady fall in fertility rates. Italy, for example, has the lowest fertility rate in the world—1.2 births per woman. The alarming decline in fertility rate in Italy is expected to result in a drop in population from the present 57.3 million people to 51.3 million over the next 25 years. The total fertility rates of Germany, Greece, Poland and Russia are, respectively, 1.4,

1.3, 1.3, and 1.3. Germany's population is set to plummet from the current 82 million to 70.8 million by 2050.

Russia's population is declining by at least 700,000 people each year, leading to the emergence of hundreds of uninhabited "ghost villages." One of Russia's leading sociologists has warned that the country's population may halve by the middle of the 21st century. Official Russian forecasts, along with those from international organizations like the UN, predict a decline from 140 million to between 80 and 100 million by 2050. In Britain women now have on average 1.7 children, compared with 2.4 children nearly 30 years ago. In the 1940s one in ten British women did not have a child; now the figure is close to one in four. In Sweden fertility rates have fallen from 2.1 a few years ago to 1.5.

In Asia, Japan has the lowest fertility rate—1.4 births per woman. Japan's population is expected to drop by more than half (from 125 million to 55 million) by 2050. A record 56% of 30-year old women in Japan are childless.

The rapid fall in fertility rates in European countries is fraught with disastrous economic, demographic and social consequences. A much reduced young work force will have to support a large elderly population (thanks to increased life expectancy), which will strain the already burdened social security system. The requirement for migrant labour will continue unabated. A UN study points out that Europe will need 1.6 million migrants a year for the next 45 years to maintain its work force at current levels to replenish aging populations and falling birth rates.

Lesbian and gay relationships are on the increase in the United States and many European countries. It is estimated that gay and lesbian couples constitute nearly ten per cent of the US population. Gay marriages are legally allowed in the US and some European countries.

The increasing fragility of the institution of marriage in Western countries is reflected in the dramatic increase in divorce rates. In Britain around 40% of all marriages now end in divorce. About half of marriages of people in their 20s end in divorce. Nearly 20% of British children witness the divorce of their parents before they reach the age of 16. It is estimated that this trend will grow and that in a few years only 50% of British children will experience a normal, conventional family life. In Sweden and in the US the divorce rate is nearly 50%. In France nearly one-third of all marriages end in divorce. It is estimated that if the present trend continues, nearly 40% of all marriages in Europe and the US will be doomed to failure.

The consequences of marital breakdown, separation and divorce are particularly disastrous for women and children. The number of single-parent families (mostly headed by women) as a result of divorce or birth out of wedlock is rapidly increasing in all European countries. In Britain, for example, more than 20% of children live with only one parent. There are more than 1.6 million single-parent families in Britain. In the US nearly 25% of all households are single-parent.

The consequences of divorce and living in single-parent families are traumatic for children. The available evidence indicates that the absence of fathers is a key factor in the

impoverishment of children. Generally, children from single-parent families do not perform as well in school as children from normal families. Furthermore, such children often have behavioural and psychological problems, including drug abuse, delinquency and propensity to violence. Alarmed by the growing incidence of suicide among children living in single-parent families, school shoot-outs and two teenagers killing their father, the US President George W. Bush recently proposed spending \$300 million a year on initiatives to strengthen marriages. A recent study at York University in Britain, based on surveys by the World Health Organisation and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, found that British children from single-parent families were among the unhappiest and unhealthiest in Europe. On a scale of “well being” they ranked 21st out of 25 EU nations. Many youngsters are barely on speaking terms with their parents and many were unhappy in school. They were found to be more promiscuous, with more than a third admitting having sex by the age of 15. More than a quarter of 15-year olds had been drunk 20 times or more, while 39% had used cannabis.

Remaining single, voluntary childlessness, delayed pregnancy and avoidance of breast feeding have adverse consequences for women’s health. Researches reveal that upper middle class and wealthier women are more at the risk of breast cancer because they tend to delay marriage and motherhood, have no or fewer children, prefer not to breastfeed the child, and are likely to have hormone replacement therapy. All these factors have a positive bearing on the onset of breast cancer. In Western countries the rate of breast cancer is 90-100 per 100,000 women.

Islam attaches a great deal of importance to the sanctity of marriage. It emphasizes that sexual gratification should occur only within the fold of marriage. The Prophet is reported to have said: “Marriage is a part of my way; therefore one who turns away from my way does not belong to me.” Sexual promiscuity, cohabitation outside marriage, birth out of wedlock and voluntary childlessness are strongly disapproved in the Islamic tradition.

Inter-civilizational dialogue

Most of our readers must be familiar with the thesis of clash of civilizations propounded by the American political scientist Samuel Huntington. Huntington argues that the principal source of conflict in the international arena in the years to come will not be primarily ideological or economic but cultural. He sees Islam and Western Christianity as potentially pitted against each other as the defining feature of the rapidly changing global scenario. Underlying Huntington’s thesis is the assumption that a clash of civilizations between the Islamic and Western worlds is inevitable, largely because, in his view, Islam cannot peacefully coexist with other cultures and civilizations.

Huntington’s argument rests on fallacious premises and questionable assumptions about the dynamics of human society and civilization. His thesis has been repudiated by some of the world’s leading intellectuals and writers and publicly denounced by many statesmen and heads of states in Europe and the United States.

A much-needed corrective to the misguided thesis of the clash of civilizations has recently been provided by the UN-sponsored document on the Alliance of Civilizations. The UN initiative was cosponsored by the prime ministers of predominantly Catholic Spain and Muslim Turkey. The Alliance of Civilizations report was prepared by a cross-cultural group of 20 prominent international figures from a variety of religious traditions, including the former Iranian president Mohammed Khatami and Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The report was presented to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan at a ceremony in Istanbul on 13 November 2006. The report calls for urgent efforts to bridge the growing divide between Muslims and the West. It points out that the main causes of the rift are not religion, culture or history, but recent political developments, notably the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Kofi Annan pointed out at the ceremony that as long as the Palestinians live under occupation, exposed to daily frustration and humiliation, and as long as Israelis are blown up in buses and in dance halls, so long will passions everywhere be inflamed. He added that no other dispute had such a huge symbolic or emotional impact on people.

The Alliance of Civilizations report notes that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, along with Western military interventions in countries like Iraq and Afghanistan, contributes significantly to the growing sense of resentment and mistrust that mars relations among communities. The report warns that globalization is contributing to the discord, with many communities perceiving it as “an assault.” For these communities, the report says, “the prospect of greater well-being has come at a high price, which includes cultural homogenisation, family dislocation, challenges to traditional lifestyles and environmental degradation.”

The report points out that “people who feel that they face persistent discrimination, humiliation or marginalization are reacting by asserting their identity more aggressively. However, the report dismisses the notion that a clash of civilizations is inevitable. It emphasizes that “the need to build bridges between Muslims and the West has never been greater”.

In a related development, a recent BBC-sponsored survey of people in 27 countries says that an average of 56% people said they saw positive links between the West and the Islamic world, despite current global tensions. Doug Miller, president of Globescan, the agency which carried out the survey, said the results suggested that the world was not heading towards an inevitable and wide-ranging “clash of civilizations.” Most of the respondents felt the conflict between Muslims and the West was about political power and interests, and not about culture and religion. Interestingly, the most positive responses came from Western countries, saying it is possible to find common ground between Islamic countries and the West.

Loneliness and Alzheimer's disease

Dementia is emerging as an increasingly worrisome ailment in large parts of the world, especially in Western countries. It is defined as an acquired deterioration in cognitive abilities



that impairs the successful performance of daily activities. Loss of memory is the most common cognitive dysfunction in dementia. In addition to memory, other mental faculties, such as language, calculation, visuospatial ability, judgement and problem solving, are also affected. Dementia affects four million people in the United States and involves a total health care cost of \$100 billion annually. Alzheimer's disease (AD) is the most common cause of dementia. In the US, approximately 10% of all persons over the age of 70 experience significant memory loss, and in more than half of the cases the cause is

Alzheimer's disease. In the US the annual cost of caring for a single AD patient in an advanced stage of the disease is estimated at \$50,000. In India about 3% of people in the age group of 65-75 suffer from dementia.

A recent study of more than 800 elderly patients in the US, who were followed over a four-year period, has suggested that people who lead lonely lives are twice as likely to develop Alzheimer's disease. This was revealed in a paper published in *Archives of General Psychiatry* in 2007. Social isolation has already been shown to be linked to dementia, but this is the first time researchers have looked at how lonely people actually felt.

The study found that the risk of developing AD increased by 51% for each point of the loneliness score. Those with the highest loneliness score of 3.2 had about 2.1 times the risk of developing AD, compared to those with a low score of 1.4. In addition, autopsies were carried out on 90 patients who died during the study to investigate certain physical symptoms of AD, such as deposits of protein outside and around nerve cells.

The leader of the study Professor Robert Wilson, professor of neuropsychology at Rush University Medical Centre in the United States, points out that loneliness may affect systems in the brain dealing with cognition and memory, making lonely people more vulnerable to the effects of age-related decline in neural pathways. Professor Wilson adds that we need to be aware that loneliness has not only an emotional impact on old people but also a physical impact.

The National Institute on Aging at the University of Chicago sponsored a study in 2006, which found that men and women between 50 and 68 who scored the highest on measures of loneliness also had high blood pressure, which is a major risk factor for heart disease, the number one killer in the US. Lonely people, according to the study, are also susceptible to depression, alcoholism, weak immune system, impaired sleep and suicidal tendencies.

The Alliance of Civilizations report notes that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, along with Western military interventions in countries like Iraq and Afghanistan, contributes significantly to the growing sense of resentment and mistrust that mars relations among communities.

In China six million people suffer from AD, a third of all Alzheimer's patients in the world, and the number of diagnosed cases is rising. The increase in incidence of AD in China is linked to the erosion of the country's traditional support networks. Residential patterns in large cities in China, as in other cities around the world, are undergoing a radical transformation. Living in high-rise buildings and apartments breeds individualism and social isolation. This new urban ecology affects old people the most—especially those who live alone and have no one to talk to—and results in loneliness and depression. And depression is a risk factor for AD.

The worrisome increase in AD is related to a set of social, cultural, behavioural and psychological factors. For one thing, people are living longer, thanks to modern medicine and better health care facilities. The significant contributory factors include the breakdown of networks of support provided by the extended family and kin, neighbourhood and the community, accelerated geographical and occupational mobility on the part of the professional class, growing individualism and the increasing trend towards nuclearisation of family. All this makes old people feel increasingly lonely and depressed and susceptible to a variety of physical and psychosomatic ailments, including AD.

Recent researches suggest that the US is becoming increasingly socially isolated. One recent study, for example, found that one-fourth of Americans say they have no one with whom they could share and discuss important personal matters. Paradoxically, modern information and communication technologies—especially the mobile phone and the Internet—seem to facilitate greater communication and connectedness among people. At the same time, personal, face-to-face interaction is being increasingly replaced by virtual or online communication. Michael Lewis, in his book *The Future Just Happened* (2000) draws attention to the social effects of the Net and observes that the Internet tends to encourage isolation and seclusion among youngsters in relation to the family, neighbourhood and the wider society.

Robert Putnam has described the decline of community in the US in the metaphor of 'bowling alone.' He points out that growing social isolation is closely linked to the escalating rate of depression and other signs of worsening mental and physical health.

Islam places great emphasis on human brotherhood, fellow-feeling and sharing life's joys and sorrows with others. It discourages asceticism, world-renunciation and isolation from the wider community. The Prophet is reported to have said: "A Muslim who lives in the midst of Muslims and bears with their cruelty and unkindness (towards him) is better than the one who does not live among them." The emphasis on social interaction and participation is reflected in the importance attached to cooperation and mutual help, in the norms governing family life (especially in respect of parents and elderly persons), in the obligations towards kin and neighbours, in etiquette and manners, and in the instruction to offer prayers in the mosque. This emphasis on social participation and engagement greatly mitigates the pain of loneliness experienced by elderly people.

Circumcision and the prevention of AIDS

HIV infection/AIDS is a global scourge, with cases reported from virtually every country. The current estimate of the number of cases of HIV infection among adults worldwide is over 37 million, two-thirds of whom are in sub-Saharan Africa. Nearly 50% of cases are women. In addition, an estimated 2.5 million children younger than age 15 are living with HIV/AIDS. There are three million deaths from AIDS annually, making it the fourth leading cause of mortality worldwide. The cumulative number of AIDS-related deaths worldwide through the year 2003 exceeds 20 million. In 2006, 2.8 million people in sub-Saharan Africa became infected with HIV, out of which 2.1 million died.

In December 2006 two major trials were carried out by the US National Institute of Health in Kenya and Uganda. The full data from the trials were published in a paper in *The Lancet* in February 2007. The paper says that conclusive data shows that circumcision reduces men's chances of catching HIV by up to 60%. "This is an extraordinary development," said Dr. Kevin de Cock, Director of the World Health Organisation's AIDS Department. Circumcision seems to be the most potent intervention in HIV prevention.

A joint analysis in 2006 by WHO in Geneva, UNAIDS and other experts around the world found that in sub-Saharan Africa circumcision could avert 2 million new infections and 0.3 million deaths over the subsequent 10 years. These studies lead to the conclusion that "circumcision must now be deemed to be a proven intervention for reducing the risk of heterosexually acquired HIV infection in adult men." Medical researches have found circumcision to be a highly effective preventive intervention in respect of several diseases in men and women. There is a strong correlation between circumcision and the absence of cancer of male genitals. A number of studies have documented higher rates of cervical cancer in women who had uncircumcised partners. A recent large international study has provided overwhelming evidence of the link between lack of male circumcision and cervical cancer in the female partner. Sexual relations with uncircumcised males put women at greater risk of a variety of infections.

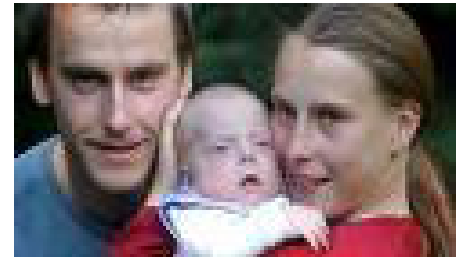
The increase in incidence of AD in China is linked to the erosion of the country's traditional support networks. Residential patterns in large cities in China, as in other cities around the world, are undergoing a radical transformation. Living in high-rise buildings and apartments breeds individualism and social isolation. This new urban ecology affects old people the most—especially those who live alone and have no one to talk to—and results in loneliness and depression. And depression is a risk factor for AD.

Legitimising incest?

Incestuous relationships have been universally disapproved across the world and in all ages. However, isolated incidence of incest have been reported among royal families in ancient Egypt, ancient Persia and Rome, Thailand, Japan, Hawaii and among the Inca of highland South America. Pharaoh Ramses II (who lived during the age of Prophet Moses) had

married his own daughter. These incidences constitute an exception to the universal existence of incest prohibitions.

Once in a while one hears of stray, isolated cases of incest, which is otherwise considered a pathetic deviation from the normative order of society. According to the BBC Internet News (7 March 2007), Patrick Stuebing, 30, and Susan Karolewski, 22, of Leipzig, Germany, who are real brother and sister, are living together as a couple for the last six years and have four children from this relationship. Their whole family broke apart when they were younger. Patrick did not meet his mother and other members of his family until he was 23. He met his sister Susan for the first time after their mother died and fell in love with her. Susan says she does not feel guilty about their relationship.



Incest is a criminal offence in Germany. Patrick has already served a two-year sentence for committing incest. Three of his children have been taken away by the authorities and placed in the care of foster families. The couple's lawyer has lodged an appeal with Germany's highest judicial authority, the Federal Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe, in order to overturn the ban on incest. The case has prompted a heated debate in the German media. A ruling from the Constitutional Court is expected in the next few months. Incidentally, France has abolished the law against incest.

Medical research has shown that there is a higher risk of genetic abnormalities when close relatives--especially father and daughter, brother and sister—have a child together. When siblings have children there is a 50% chance that the offspring will be abnormal. The average risk of genetic abnormalities is increased eightfold for brother-sister and parent-child matings. The mortality rate among children born of incest is about twice that of normal children, and among those who survive, genetic defects such as dwarfism, heart deformities, deaf-mutism and severe mental retardation are ten times more common.

Stray, isolated Western countries, by the media, should wider social and Western societies. evidence from ethology that incest human society have biological basis. however, is the fact against incest is consciousness of course of

A joint analysis in 2006 by WHO in Geneva, UNAIDS and other experts around the world found that in sub-Saharan Africa circumcision could avert 2 million new infections and 0.3 million deaths over the subsequent 10 years. These studies lead to the conclusion that “circumcision must now be deemed to be a proven intervention for reducing the risk of heterosexually acquired HIV infection in adult men.”

incidents of incest in which are reported be viewed in the cultural context of There is some comparative prohibitions in possibly some More important, that societal sanction ingrained in the children in the socialization.

Cultural and moral values in the wider society have a significant bearing on the incest taboo.

The steady erosion of moral and religious values in Western societies is all too evident. This is reflected in increasing sexual permissiveness among men and women, in the growing incidence of cohabitation without marriage and births out of wedlock, in the increasing use of explicit sexual images in advertising, media and the Internet, and in growing gay and lesbian relationships. In France, a survey carried out in 2000 indicated that men had an average of 11.3 sexual partners in their lifetime, compared to 3.4 for women. About half the babies in Sweden are born to unwed mothers. In Britain four out of ten babies were born to unwed mothers in 2004. It is estimated by the Office for National Statistics in London that by 2012 most babies in Britain will be born to unwed mothers. By 2030 eight out of ten births will be outside the fold of marriage.

Family breakdown has a devastating impact on children and adolescents. Studies suggest that the trauma of watching parents split up or having no father around, coupled with an excessive exposure to explicit sexual images on television and the Internet, may speed up puberty in girls. The age at which adolescents in most Western countries mature—around 12 years—has fallen by up to 3 years over the last century. But the early onset of puberty is not being matched by emotional maturity, which could leave youngsters at a greater risk of teenage pregnancy and drug and alcohol abuse.

Islam considers incest as a horrifying transgression of the moral order of society. The prohibition against marrying close relative includes three broad categories: (i) consanguinous (blood relatives, such as parents, siblings, uncle, aunt, etc) (ii) affinal (related by marriage) (iii) lactational (related through milk fosterage and wet nursing). A man's foster sister, for example, is as unlawful for him as his natural sister.

When siblings have children there is a 50% chance that the offspring will be abnormal. The average risk of genetic abnormalities is increased eightfold for brother-sister and parent-child matings. The mortality rate among children born of incest is about twice that of normal children, and among those who survive, genetic defects such as dwarfism, heart deformities, deaf-mutism and severe mental retardation are ten times more common.

Indo-Arab Economic Relations: The Road Ahead

Dr. M. A. Hasib

Former Executive Director, Reserve Bank of India

In discussing Indo-Arab economic relations, one may focus on different dimensions of the subject, including the historical, cultural, political and economic relations between the two regions related to trade and investments. But I will not deal with them, except in broad terms. I could look at Indo-Arab economic relations, as I see them, as an Indian focusing on economic conditions and opportunities in the Arab region in the years ahead, or alternatively, I could look at the Indian economic scenario from the perspective of an Arab. I would prefer to look at the contemporary economic scenario in India in a global perspective and in respect of the future prospects for the Indian economy.

Let us start with the global perspective. The major economic powers in the world today are USA, Europe, Japan and Asia, particularly China and India. Looking at the latest trends, it appears that the world growth is lopsided. In 2004 the world economy grew by about 5 percent. Among the developed countries, the highest growth was achieved by the USA (4.4 per cent) while Europe and Japan grew only by 2.1 per cent and 1.7 per cent respectively. In the newly emerging economies the highest growth was recorded by China (9.5%), followed by Argentina (9%), Malaysia (7.1%), and India (6.9%). The current growth rate in India exceeds 8%.

Europe and Japan have been struggling for the past few years. It is the USA, the world's largest economy, which is a major driving force for the economies of the rest of the world. Should I, if I were an Arab trader or investor, look to the USA, while keeping in view the fact that profitable relations should be consistent with safety and stability? Undoubtedly, there are vast opportunities in the USA, but one needs to take a deeper look. The long-term growth rate of an economy depends on the quality of its institutions, technology, investments and savings. American institutions, with some exceptions, are among the best in the world. But is its growth rate, which is the prime determinant of international economic relations, sustainable? The American economy is consumption-driven; its per capita consumption is the highest in the world, and much of the consumption is wasteful. The American economy is debt ridden. Its households savings are close to zero. It is the rest of the world which is accumulating dollars and pumping them back into the US to finance its consumption. A vast majority of American households are under debt. Home prices driven by low interest rates are going up. But it is like a bubble which may bust any time as it has happened in the past. The main point is: will the rest of the world continue to finance the fiscal deficit of America? How long can one go on enjoying exotic foreign holidays or fighting costly wars with borrowed funds? When a bank ultimately asks a borrower to repay the loans he had taken, he will go bankrupt in similar conditions. That may happen to America, although it may not happen tomorrow or the day after. But the day of reckoning will come when international confidence in the American economy will be shattered.

So if I were asked to advise an Arab financial institution about its investment preferences, I would advise it to put only a few eggs in the American basket

It is the newly emerging economies, mainly China and India, which have been recording high growth rates. What is even more important is that their future is brighter than that of Western economies. From the Arab point of view, India could be a better destination because of historical, cultural and religious factors. Let us look at the Indian economy in a wider perspective. The Indian economy is passing through high growth phase and I dare say that, unless some unforeseen situation arises, it seems to be a secure, long-term trend. The latest estimate of the growth of GDP is more than 8%. Let us take a critical look at the growth rate of Indian economy in a historical perspective, particularly in the context of the last five decades since 1953. In the first 20 years, the growth rate varied between -3.7% and 7.6%. There were two years with negative growth rates. In ten out of twenty years, the growth rate was less than 5%. In the next twenty years, the rate varied from -5.2% to 10.5%, again with two years of negative growth rate. So the Indian economy was growing during this period, but at a relatively slow, halting rate, based as it was on mainly agriculture and government-directed policy investments. Government rules and policies hindered, rather than promoted, entrepreneurial initiative and skill. India remained a marginal player in world economy. The world seemed to have lost trust in the Indian economy, so much so that when India had to borrow from England in a critical balance of payments position in 1991-92, the Bank of England insisted on gold as security for the loans to be shipped physically to Bank of England. Fortunately the gold has been returned to India.

Things have changed for the better since 1991-92. Since then there has not been a single year with a negative growth, despite some bad monsoon years. During the last three years the growth rate has accelerated and is expected to exceed 8% in the current year. So a new trend has set in, which has been recognized and appreciated by the world. The apprehensions about the health of the Indian economy have been laid to rest and foreign investors now find India a very promising and profitable place to invest. Foreign exchange reserves, which covered less than 2 months of imports in 1990-91, now cover more than 14 months of imports. Total reserves are more than the external debt, a sure sign of the growing strength of the Indian economy. Is this a short term, sustainable trend? Or is it only a bubble which may burst, as I fear it might happen to the American economy?

The answer to this question lies in certain far-reaching changes which are currently taking place in the Indian economy. Savings and investment are two important determinants of growth. Gross domestic savings, which were around 9% in 1952, have steadily increased to an estimated 29% in the current year. Capital formation, which was about 8.7% in 1950-51, is estimated to have gone up to above 30%. These are sure indications of dependable growth. Despite poverty and low per capita income, households contribute 22% out of 29% of Gross Domestic Savings.

Second, the composition of Indian output has undergone significant changes in recent years. About half a century ago, agriculture contributed more than half of GDP; its contribution now stands at 25%. It is not a weakness, but an indicator of positive changes in the

So if I were asked to advise an Arab financial institution about its investment preferences, I would advise it to put only a few eggs in the American basket.
--

economy. An economy which was largely dependent on the vagaries of the weather is now depending more on industry and services, including trade, the hospitality industry, construction, communication, and financial services (eg banking and insurance), which now contribute more than half the national output. The contribution of industry is about 24%.

Third, this transformation has come about as a result of fundamental changes in policy. Following the liberalization of the economy, entrepreneurial and technological skills have been harnessed. Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) are rated among the best in the world. The literacy rate and life expectancy have improved appreciably in recent years.

Fourth, investible resources and the quality of investment have improved. There is a healthy investment climate, which is conducive for reposing confidence in the future. India receives more than a quarter of global portfolio investment to emerging market economies. Fifth, financial stability has played an important role in the process. The banking system in India is fully compatible with Basel 1 norms, which means that the capital adequacy ratio has improved appreciably and its non-performing assets have declined. Capital and reserves have been ascending to new heights. An important factor in the current investment climate is the strict regulation of the financial system and capital market by the Reserve Bank of India and the Securities and Exchange Board of India. I may add in this context that since the majority of Arabs are Muslims, the capital market in India offers them opportunities for investment which are compliant with Shariah norms. My young friend, Dr. Shariq Nisar, has done useful research in this area, which shows that a major part of stock equity index is Shariah-compliant in accordance with internationally accepted norms. I may add, finally, that no investment opportunities are without risk but the risk should be calculated and manageable.

A major risk to the Indian economy may be caused by high oil prices and external shocks like an adverse international political climate and the possibility of loss of trust in the American economy. Undoubtedly, there are weak spots in the economy. Infrastructure, primary education and health care need radical improvement. Agriculture is in need of investment. But the important point is that things are changing in a positive direction.

Therefore, I would advise my Arab friends to take advantage of the growing opportunity for investing in India. Put a few of your eggs in the Indian nest; they will hatch and may well lay golden eggs, hopefully without catching bird flu.

Therefore, I would advise my Arab friends to take advantage of the growing opportunity for investing in India. Put a few of your eggs in the Indian nest; they will hatch and may well lay golden eggs, hopefully without catching bird flu.

(This paper was presented as the Presidential Address at a symposium on "Indo-Arab Economic Cooperation--The Road Ahead" at Islam Gymkhana, Marine Lines, Mumbai, on February 27,2006. It is reproduced here with grateful acknowledgement to Dr Hasib.)

DIGITIZATION OF ISLAM

Globalization's Gift to the Muslim *Ummah*

Professor A. R. Momin

One of the distinctive characteristics of globalization lies in the unprecedented advances in information and communication technologies, which have brought about what David Harvey aptly describes as “time-space compression”. He points out that globalization involves the shrinking of space and the shortening of time. Some scholars speak of “deterritorialization” as an important consequence of globalization, suggesting that the notion of space has undergone a radical transformation. Manuel Castells in his *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture* (1998) shows how computer-driven telecommunications have intensified global interactions and created networks which bind together individuals located in different countries into virtual communities. What is emerging, he says, is a global network society. Phrases like online worlds, virtual communities, global cyberspaces and network society are frequently mentioned in the contemporary discourse. A highly significant feature of online networks is their openness and relative autonomy. Furthermore, the Internet is an amazingly interactive medium in that it has an in-built mechanism for immediate feedback.

Some commentators argue that the Internet is generating “social capital” in the form of networks, norms and social trust that facilitate cooperation and coordination among people who share common social concerns and commitment. There are more than 5000 transnational NGOs, most of whom coordinate their activities and programmes through the Internet. The International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) has established intensive linkages, through the Internet, with non-governmental organizations working for the ban on landmines. By 1999 the ICBL became a coalition of more than 1300 NGOs which successfully persuaded and pressurized 89 countries to ratify the Landmine Treaty. It was awarded the Nobel Prize for its sustained efforts.

An eminent sociologist Zygmunt Bauman has coined the phrase *glocalization* to highlight the fact that globalization seems to reinforce not only global and transnational but also ethnic and local identities. This phenomenon is reflected in the increasing use of modern information and communication technologies by religious communities and organizations. Thus, in Thailand Buddhist monks are making increasing use of the Internet for disseminating their religious doctrines and traditions through more than 200 websites. In India, religious and spiritual satellite channels are rapidly increasing and drawing hundreds of thousands of viewers in the country as well as from amongst expatriate Indians.

Modern information and communication technologies are playing a highly important role in the revival of indigenous languages and cultures in Europe. There are more than 200 000 speakers of Breton language in France. Breton was nearly wiped out as a result of the repressive policies of successive French governments. In recent years, a remarkable revival of Breton language has taken place in France, especially in the Brittany province. In August 2000, TV Breizh began broadcasting as France's first regional channel.

The use of modern information and communication technologies for religio-political mobilization in the Islamic world on a wider scale was witnessed in Iran prior to the Islamic Revolution in 1969. During the 1970s, many of the speeches and discourses of Ali Shariati, a highly educated and influential thinker and speaker, were recorded at Mashhad University and at Husayniyah Irshad in Tehran and circulated through audiocassettes. These recorded speeches were subsequently transcribed and published in book form. The cassettes as well as the books were clandestinely distributed through a wide network of mosques, seminaries, shrines, religious councils, community centres and colleges and universities. In the mid-1970s Imam Khomeini was exiled to Iraq and later to Paris. His recorded sermons and speeches from his Neauphle-le-Chateau headquarters near Paris were widely circulated across the length and breadth of Iran. His taped messages were transmitted through telephone lines to secret locations in Tehran where they were transferred onto cassettes for duplication and distribution. These cassettes played a highly significant role in arousing popular sentiments against the Shah. Their political impact was greatly enhanced when they were aired by Western news agencies, especially the BBC.

During the Soviet era, audiocassettes of the speeches and sermons of religious leaders in Uzbekistan, which emphasized Islamic identity and Uzbek nationalism, became highly popular. The Naqshbandi Sufis established a wide network of mosques, madrasas and hospices (*khanqahs*) and extensively used audiocassettes for the dissemination of Islamic materials. During the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, audiocassettes of religious discourses and sermons were widely circulated in the country as well as among the Afghan refugees in Pakistan. These recorded speeches and sermons created a great sense of Islamic solidarity and paved the way for the emergence of a powerful movement against the Soviet occupation.

Recordings of the speeches and discourses of prominent Muslim thinkers and leaders, such as Sayyid Qutb, Ali Shariati, Mawlana Abul Ala Maududi and Dr. Asrar Ahmad, among others, are now available not only on audiocassettes but also over the Internet through the use of the latest audio streaming technology.

The preservation and transmission of the Holy Quran and the Traditions of Prophet Muhammad (may God shower His blessings on him!) was ensured through an ingenious combination of memorization, oral transmission and writing. As soon as the verses of the Quran were revealed—they were revealed incrementally over a period of 23 years—they were memorized by the Prophet and were simultaneously committed to writing at his instance. These conjoined modes of transmission—memorization and writing—have continued uninterrupted during the past fourteen centuries of the Islamic era and are still in evidence across the Islamic world. Similarly, several Companions of the Prophet recorded and wrote down his sayings and instructions—which came to be known as Hadith—during his lifetime. This process of compilation of Hadith was marked by a distinctive methodology—known as *Isnad*—involving a critical scrutiny of the chain of narrators and their biographies with a focus on their reliability. The preoccupation with the compilation of Hadith within the framework of this methodology gave rise to a vast body of literature.



The emphasis on the written word, which has been central to the Islamic tradition, resulted in a colossal and truly monumental literary output which has no parallel in the annals of early or medieval civilizations. An indication of this amazing preoccupation with writing is provided by the existence of hundreds of thousands of manuscripts on a variety of subjects in libraries and museums in Muslim countries as well as in India, Europe and North America. Islamic manuscripts, which have survived the vicissitudes of time, are estimated to number more than three million. In addition to Islamic countries, a large number of Islamic manuscripts are found in libraries and museums in Europe, North America, Japan and Australia. Fuat Sezgin's monumental work *Geschichte des Arabischen Schrifttums* contains over 1.5 million entries on extant Islamic manuscripts. A large number of extant manuscripts are in great danger of being damaged or even lost for ever. In recent years a pioneering effort in respect of preserving, restoring, cataloguing and publishing Islamic manuscripts has been undertaken by Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation, London and Juma Al Majid Centre for Culture and Heritage, Dubai.



Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation was established in London in 1988 by the Yamani Cultural and Charitable Foundation, headed by Shaykh Zaki Yamani. The main objective of the Foundation is the documentation and preservation of Islamic manuscripts. This is done through promoting, initiating and sponsoring research in the field of Islamic manuscripts, surveying and cataloguing the existing manuscripts, preserving manuscript collections, publishing new critical editions of Islamic manuscripts of particular significance, and

establishing a reference library with the research tools necessary for the study of Islamic manuscripts.

Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation has published World Survey of Islamic Manuscripts in four volumes. In addition, it has published, in several volumes, catalogues of Islamic manuscripts in the libraries of Albania, Niger, Sarajevo, Bulgaria, Egypt, Mali, Palestine, Makka, Yemen and India. The Foundation has also published new critical editions of several important books dealing with Islamic disciplines.



Sheikh Ahmed Zaki Yamani
Founder & Chairman of
Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage
Foundation

The Juma Al Majid Centre for Culture and Heritage was established as a public, non-profit, welfare-oriented educational and cultural institution in 1991 in Dubai. It is financed by permanent endowments from its founder and president Shaykh Juma Al Majid. One of the major objectives of the Centre is to acquire microfilms of manuscripts and documents related to Islamic disciplines. More than 70,000 original, photocopied and microfilmed manuscripts and documents are stored in the library of the Centre. The Centre also has 1344 manuscript catalogues of well known libraries from 52 countries across the world.

One of the objectives of the Centre is to repair and restore original manuscripts. The Centre has invented Al Majid Restoration Machine for restoring damaged manuscripts and protecting them from further deterioration. The Centre has donated 24 such machines to Islamic institutions in more than 14 countries.

In recent years, there has come about a world-wide resurgence of Islamic awakening and revival, which is conspicuous not only in Muslim countries but also among Muslim living in Western countries. This Islamic resurgence is reflected in the growing demand for Islamic literature, in the proliferation of religious movements and communitarian organizations, in the increasing involvement of Muslim youth and women in faith-based activities, and in the growing use of modern information and communication technologies for disseminating and exchanging Islamic materials as well as shared concerns.

Computer technologies are remarkably adept with both the textual and phonetic modes of storage, retrieval and transmission. In recent years, varied computer technologies, including websites, CD-ROM, homepages and audio streaming technology, have been used for archiving, retrieval and dissemination of Islamic materials. The entire text of the Holy Quran (including the Arabic text and recitation by trained *qaris*), its translation in English and other European languages, brief commentaries on the Holy Quran and several collections of Hadith together with English translations are available on CD-ROM as well as on the Internet. A well-known software is **Alim**, made by ISL Software Corporation, Maryland, USA. It provides information on a wide range of subjects.

An important Islamic website devoted to Quranic exegesis (*Tafsir*) is Al Tafsir.com. The site provides the text of the Holy Quran, recitation, Quranic exegesis from several standard texts, translations of the Quran in 17 languages and information related to Quranic

disciplines. Translations of the text of the Holy Quran are provided in English, German, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Jaoanese, Dutch, Chinese, Urdu, Turkish, Persian, Indonesian Russian, Malay, Hindi and Bengali. With the use of the latest computer technologies, the site allows cross-referencing and hyper links on a verse-by-verse and word-by-word basis.

AlTafsir.com began in 2001 under the aegis of Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, Amman. The Institute was established in 1980 by the late King Hussein of Jordan. Nearly 70 to 100 prominent Muslim scholars from around the world are associated with the Institute.

The entire Arabic text of Imam Bukhari's celebrated collection of Hadith *Al-Jami' al-Sahih* as well as the well-known collection of Hadith by Imam Muslim are available on the website of Al-Islam (www.al-islam.com). An English translation of Bukhari (by Muhammad Muhsin Khan) and of Muslim (by Abdul Hamid Siddiqui) are available on the website of the Muslim Students Association of the University of South California (www.usc.edu/dept/MSA). These two sites also publish the Forty Hadith by Imam Nawawi in English. The multi-volume concordance and index of nine well-known collections of Hadith, prepared by the renowned Dutch Orientalist A. J. Wensinck, has been converted to electronic form. Several collections of Hadith in English translation are available on 22 websites and in French on 8 sites.

Islamic websites, which are rapidly multiplying, provide a wide range of information and materials, including an explication of the verses of the Holy Quran and selections from Hadith literature, informed opinion on the religious, social, economic, political and cultural affairs of the Muslim world, chat rooms, and online *fatwa* (solicited legal opinion or edict pertaining to specific issues and problems faced by Muslims in day-to-day life). **IslamiCity** (<http://www.islam.org>), based in the USA, is one of the important Islamic websites. In addition to providing fairly comprehensive information on the Quran and the Sunnah, the website offers online *fatwa* service, radio and television channels, chat rooms, Islamic screensavers and electronic greeting cards. IslamiCity has published more than 5000 *fatawa* on the Internet.

Another important Islamic website is **Huruf** (<http://www.huruf.com>), which is jointly managed by Knowledge Management Systems (KnowSys) and ITLogic. Among other materials, it offers informed opinion and comments on contemporary issues related to the Muslim world. It also espouses inter-cultural and inter-civilizational dialogue. The website of **As-Sunna Foundation** of America (<http://www.sunnah.org/msaec/>) provides information of a general nature on fundamental Islamic themes and sources. Another website muslimheritage.com provides information on the contribution of Islamic civilization to science, technology, arts and architecture. It also provides information on prominent Muslim scholars and Islamic organizations. IslamOnline.com provides current news and analysis pertaining to the Islamic world. Gulfnet is an important computer network which is linked to eight academic and research institutions in the Gulf region.

Some websites are specifically devoted to providing *fatawa* (singular: *fatwa*) online. The distribution of *fatawa* on the Internet can be classified into two broad categories:(i) archiving

as well as compilation of various *fatawa* which are already published in specialized books on the subject (ii) solicited *fatawa* in response to specific requests from surfers. The Saudi Arabian Permanent Committee for Islamic Research and Fatawa, a government-regulated body, runs a website called **Fatawa-Online** (<http://www.fatwa.online.com>). It received over 30,000 hits from surfers between October 1999 and December 2000. The As-Sunna Foundation of America (<http://www.sunnah.org/fatwa/>.) offers *fatawa* online. Another site is **Dar al-Ifta al-Misriyya** (<http://www.haneen.com.eg/fatwa/fatwapage.html>). IslamOnline.com has a section on *fatawa* and counseling. Prominent institutions of Islamic learning, such as Al-Azhar University in Cairo, offer online *fatawa* services. Online *fatawa* are available in English as well as Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Malay, Urdu, Thai and other languages.

The task of providing authentic legal opinion in response to specific queries from surfers entails a great deal of competence and responsibility. Only a person who is well-versed in Islamic law, has a specialized knowledge of *fatwa* literature and has received training in issuing *fatawa* at a reputed institution of Islamic learning can perform this task. One peculiar problem with solicited *fatawa* on the Internet is that one cannot be sure whether the person who is providing the required information or opinion is a professionally trained and competent scholar or an amateur person with a smattering of Islamic law.

Computer technologies are increasingly being used for archiving and preserving Islamic texts. At the Centre for Islamic Jurisprudence in Qom, Iran, several thousand texts, both Shi'i and Sunni, have been converted to electronic form. An Islamic organization based in Qatar has undertaken an ambitious project to preserve, by microfilming, unpublished manuscripts on Islamic subjects, which are found in large numbers in Muslim countries as well as in India.

Contemporary Islamic movements, especially those which have large, transnational followers, are making increasing use of modern information and communication technologies for providing information about their activities and programmes and for reinforcing connectivity and internal cohesion. The Naqshbandiya-Haqqaniya order of Sufism, with roots in Turkey, Cyprus, Syria and Lebanon, is one of the most prominent Sufi orders in Western Europe and North America. The teachings as well as activities and programmes of the order are disseminated to its followers located in different countries through books and pamphlets as well as over the Internet.

The Aga Khan Trust for Culture was founded in 1988 and is registered in Geneva, Switzerland as a private, non-denominational, philanthropic foundation. One of the aims of the Trust is to increase cross-cultural understanding of Islamic architecture and the close linkage between culture and architecture in Islamic civilization. The Trust has commissioned a new project called **ArchNet** (www.archnet.org) at the School of Architecture and Planning, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA. The main objective of Archnet is to provide extensive high-quality, globally accessible intellectual resources focused on topics of architecture, urban design, urban development (including restoration and conservation), housing landscape, and concerns related to the Islamic world. Archnet provides, on an accessible server, images, a searchable text library, bibliographical reference databases, online

lectures, statistical information, papers and reviews. Currently there are over 8000 images and 1500 publications related to the historical as well as contemporary architecture of the Islamic world in the Digital Library.

The Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World, founded in Leiden, the Netherlands in 1998, aims at promoting inter-disciplinary research on contemporary social and intellectual trends and movements in Muslim societies and communities. Its redesigned website (www.isim.nl) is a useful source of information on the contemporary Islamic world.

One of the significant features of our globalizing era is the existence of transnational communities or diasporas which maintain a vast network of culture and communication—greatly facilitated by the incredible advances in the means of transportation and in information and communication technologies—with their countries of origin. Telephone, satellite television and the Internet are playing a highly important role in connecting the diasporic communities to their roots and their homelands. With the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, more than 50% of the local Palestinian population were driven out of their homelands. More than four million refugees took shelter in the neighbouring countries as well as in Europe and North America. A whole generation was born and brought up in foreign lands, cut off from their homelands and their cultural roots. The members of this generation are now discovering, thanks to homepages on the Internet, their religious and cultural traditions as well as the villages from which their parents were forced to migrate. The commemoration of the martyrdom of young Palestinians killed by the Israeli forces now takes place on the Internet. Furthermore, families create their own websites to search for lost relatives. Messages, images and appeals related to shared concerns are downloaded from the Internet, forwarded and circulated, printed and pasted in mosques, on university and on café walls. Historical pictures of Palestinian villages and towns before the exile and those of the *intifada* are amongst the most downloaded and forwarded images. The growing use of computer technology is thus transforming the Palestinian refugees into a transnational virtual community and facilitating the reconstruction of their identity. Chat rooms, websites and mailing lists provide the infrastructure for this virtual community. The cybercafé provides an amiable atmosphere for the Palestinians to meet, exchange news and messages and to socialize. This process is reinforced through the Palestinian television channel and the Palestine Broadcast Corporation.

The Al-Jazeera, an independent 24-hour television channel with headquarters in Qatar, has greatly transformed public opinion in the Middle East. It is broadcasted via satellites and the Internet around the world. Al-Jazeera's on-the-spot telecast of the *intifada* and live shots of Israeli atrocities on the Palestinians are immediately spread on the Internet and distributed to a wide audience of Palestinians and other Arabs.

There is a sizeable Iranian diaspora in North Canada, USA and Europe. The Internet is playing a highly significant role in connecting the diasporic Iranian communities to each other and to their homeland. One of the prominent online Iranian magazines is www.iranian.com, with several sections and links. The news section, for example, has links to more than 150 online Iranian magazines and newspapers. Interestingly, Iran's online newspapers appear much before the printed editions are available on news stands in Tehran

and other cities. In addition to magazines and newspapers, one can also access through the Internet Radio Payam (Tehran's local radio) as well as Radio Sada-e-Iran (a round-the-clock radio station located in Los Angeles). In Stockholm, Iranian local radio stations download programmes from the Internet and rebroadcast them for the local Iranian community.

The Nizari Ismailis are one of the small Shi'i sects living in more than 25 countries across Asia, Africa, Europe, North America and Australia. The members of the community, who are generally highly educated, use computer technologies, from websites and e-mail listservs to weblogs and IRCS, to access and exchange information, issues and concerns of common interest. The Internet thus serves as a means of strengthening community solidarity and identity.

Modern information and communication technologies are also increasingly being used for transnational ethnic and political mobilization. The Kurdish refugees in North America and Europe, for example, run their own television channel and extensively use the Internet for reinforcing community solidarity and for pushing their political agenda.

As the use of computers, the Internet and mobile phones among Muslims is rapidly increasing, these services are also being used for disseminating and exchanging information about such things as the dates of Islamic festivals according to the Islamic calendar and other issues of common concern. A couple of months ago, newspapers in several European countries republished highly offensive cartoons of Prophet Muhammad (which were originally published by a Danish paper *Jyllands-Posten* in September 2005). This produced a great deal of anger and resentment among Muslims across the world. Some Muslim countries recalled their envoys to Denmark and declared a ban on the import of Danish goods. Danish goods and commodities were boycotted on a wide scale across the Muslim world, especially in the Middle East. Messages to boycott Danish goods were extensively circulated and forwarded through mobile phones and the Internet.

Modern computer technologies have great potential and prospects in store for the dissemination and exchange of Islamic materials, for forging communitarian unity, for effectively responding to the challenges facing the Muslim *ummah*, and for reinforcing Islamic identity.

‘Don’t touch my headscarf’

IOS Research Network

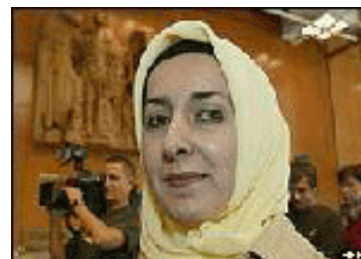


Jack Straw, Britain’s former foreign secretary and current leader of the Commons, stirred up a hornet’s nest on October 6 by stating that the veil creates a barrier and “separateness” between Muslims and other people and makes relations between communities more difficult. Straw, who has been known as a fair-minded advocate of minority rights, said in his controversial remarks that when he meets Muslim women from his Blackburn constituency—which has a large Muslim presence—he often asks them to remove their veils so that he could have a real, face-

to-face interaction.

Britain’s prime minister Tony Blair joined the debate, saying, “It is important these issues are raised and discussed and I think it is perfectly sensible if you raise it in a measured and considered way, which Straw did.” On October 17 he said that the veil was a “mark of separation” between the Muslim community and the rest of British society and that’s why it makes other people from outside the community feel uncomfortable. The prime-minister-in-waiting chancellor Gordon Brown and another cabinet minister Harriet Harman also expressed their support for Straw’s views. Harman argued that those who wear the veil are cutting themselves off from the rest of society.

Britain’s shadow home secretary David Davis said in an article in the Sunday Telegraph that religious divisions were threatening to corrode fundamental values such as freedom of speech. He said that what Jack touched on was the fundamental issue of whether, in Britain, we are developing a divided society, whether we are creating a series of closed societies within our open society, whether we are inadvertently encouraging a kind of voluntary apartheid. He added that there was a feeling some Muslim leaders wanted to be protected “from criticism, argument, parody, satire and all the other challenges that happen in a society that has free speech as its highest value.”



London Mayor, Ken Livingstone, has also weighed into the debate, saying he would like Muslims to give up the veil. But he suggested that change was not something that could be imposed from outside the Muslim community. A day after Straw made his controversial remarks, a white young man, shouting racist abuse, tore a Muslim woman’s veil from her face.

Jack Straw’s remarks evoked a strong reaction from Britain’s Muslim community. Lord Nazir Ahmed complained there was a constant theme of demonization of the Muslim community and politicians and journalists were jumping on a bandwagon because it is fashionable these days to have a go at the Muslims. Massoud Shadjareh, chairman of the Islamic Human Rights Commission in Britain, said it was astonishing Straw chose to “selectively discriminate on the basis of religion.” Rajnaara Akhtar, head of an organization called Protect-Hijab, added that the “appalling comments showed a deep lack of understanding.”

An estimated 70 people, including 20 Muslim women in veils, demonstrated in Straw's constituency against his comments.

Straw was also criticized by the opposition Liberal Democrat constitutional affairs spokesman Simon Hughes, who questioned whether a British MP had the right to criticize the way people in his constituency dressed. Oliver Letwin, the main opposition Conservative Party's policy chief, added that if Muslim women wanted to wear the veil they cannot be prevented from doing so. He said it was dangerous to suggest that they should not be allowed to. Hazel Blears, chairwoman of Labour Party, said there was a need for debate on the issue but insisted "I don't think it's right for government to lay down laws about what people wear and what they shouldn't."

A couple of days after Straw's controversial remarks, Aishah Azmi, a 23-year old Muslim teaching assistant at Headfield Church of England Junior School in West Yorkshire, was suspended for refusing to remove her veil in class. She told the BBC that she could remove the veil, but not in front of male colleagues. She added that her veil had not caused problems with the children with whom she had a "brilliant relationship."

The hijab issue in Europe

The controversy over the Islamic headscarf has been simmering in Europe for the past few years and has gained an added impetus following the terrorist attack on the United States in September 2001 and the attack on London in July 2005. In France, the controversy erupted in 1989 when three Muslim girls wore headscarves to their public school in Creil, a suburb in the north of Paris. The event triggered a heated public debate. Some commentators argued that the incident reflected a clash between the identity of (Muslim) immigrants and the French national identity, which is defined by *laïcité* (France's secularism) and the republican model of cultural assimilation. In their eyes, the controversy provided a confirmation of the fact that Islam was incompatible with the secular principles of French society.



The controversy resurfaced in 1994 when the right-wing French government issued a circular to public schools forbidding the wearing of any ostentatious religious symbols, such as the headscarf, in public schools. It was argued that public schools in France represented the very embodiment of national ideology of egalitarianism and secularism. The French education minister Francois Bayrou declared in the parliamentary debates on the headscarf issue in October 1994 that 'French national identity is inseparable from its schools.' In the same year, some Muslim girls wearing headscarves were expelled from a public school.

In 2003, President Jacques Chirac appointed a commission under the chairmanship of Bernard Stasi, a former minister, to consider the question of religious symbols in public schools. The Stasi Commission suggested in its report, submitted in 2003, that wearing conspicuous religious symbols, such as the Islamic headscarf, should be banned in public

schools. The report was accepted and implemented by the government. However, headscarves can be worn in private Muslim schools and at the university where the law on religious symbols does not apply.



The headscarf controversy in France affected other European countries. It surfaced in Belgium in 2003. The schools in Brussels dependent on the municipal network decided in 2003 to disallow the registration of students wearing headscarves. Muslim students reacted to the ban by setting up a collective called 'Don't touch my headscarf', which bears allusion to the successful anti-racist campaign of SOS Racisme ('Don't touch my mate') in France during the 1980s. The decision to ban headscarves in schools in Brussels generated an intense public debate. Two French-

speaking members of the federal parliament introduced a bill in the Belgian senate to ban the headscarf in public places. The present position in Belgium is that each school has the freedom to adopt its own policy on the issue.

In the Netherlands, the wearing of headscarves by three Moroccan girls in a French public school in 1989 generated an intense public debate. The editor-in-chief of a Dutch feminist monthly declared in 2000 that she would in no case accept a woman with a headscarf as an editor of her magazine, which added fuel to the controversy. In 2003, some faculty members at Leiden University objected to the presence of two Muslim students wearing headscarves in class on the ground that face covering 'impeded interactive communication in the class room and caused teachers and other students to be uncomfortable.' They brought the matter to the Dean of the Faculty who placed it before the University Board. The Board decided to ban face covering in the class room. In January 2006 the Dutch parliament voted to ban the headscarf.

In September 2004, local politicians in the north of Italy resurrected old laws against the wearing of masks to ban the Islamic headscarf. In July 2005, the Italian parliament approved anti-terrorist laws which make hiding one's features from the public—including through wearing the veil—an offence.

Germany has followed a fairly liberal policy in respect of the veil. The provinces have the freedom to adopt their own policy regarding the wearing of veils or headscarves in schools. The Federal Administrative Court in Germany ruled that a Muslim girl can be exempted from swimming lessons if these are not sexually segregated. In 2003 an interesting case related to the wearing of headscarf by a teacher in the class room came up before the German Supreme Court. The plaintiff, a Muslim woman born in Afghanistan in 1972, had lived in Germany from 1987 and acquired German nationality in 1995. In 1998, she had completed her education to become a teacher in an elementary school, but was refused commission because she was not willing to remove her headscarf before class. In her petition she maintained that her wearing of the headscarf represented individual and religiously motivated conduct that was protected by the German constitution. The Supreme Court gave its verdict in her favour, saying that the wearing of headscarf by a civil servant in

front of a class of students is constitutionally protected by the principle of freedom of religion.

In Britain, 80 to 90 per cent of students in several inner-city schools are Muslim. In the 1970s a big controversy erupted over school uniforms that required girls to wear short skirts. Girls who did not comply with the requirement were expelled from schools and in some cases parents took their daughters out of school over the issue. A Muslim liaison committee was formed in Bradford to negotiate with the local authorities about this issue. Compromises were eventually worked out, allowing Muslim girls to wear trousers as long as the trousers match the colour of the school uniform. Girls are now generally allowed to put on headscarves and they can wear tracksuits for physical education classes. Several schools have tried to organize separate swimming classes for boys and girls.

The ban on hijab in Muslim countries

Some Muslim countries, notably Turkey and Tunisia, have banned the wearing of headscarves in schools and government offices. In some Muslim countries, the ruling establishment, military junta and the educated elite continue to be under the strong influence of Western culture and secularism. They tend to look down upon those of their compatriots who are deeply committed to Islamic values, traditions and cultural symbols and often make them a target of ridicule, derision and victimization. In 1999, Merve Kavakci, a computer scientist who was elected a member of the Turkish parliament, was prevented from taking oath and was subsequently stripped of her Turkish citizenship because she entered parliament with her Islamic headscarf. Earlier, her father, Yusuf Ziya Kavakci, had to resign as Dean of the Faculty of Islamic Studies at Ataturk University on account of supporting Muslim women's right to wear the *hijab*. Her mother lost her teaching position at the same university for wearing the *hijab*. The family had to migrate to the United States.



In May 2006, a gunman shot dead one judge and wounded four others in a senior court in Turkey. It appears that one of the wounded judges had ruled last year against teachers wearing the Islamic headscarf. The gunman is reported to have shouted, 'I am the soldier of God!'

Tunisia passed a law in 1981, which prohibits women from wearing the Islamic veil in public places. Recently the Tunisian authorities have launched a campaign against the veil. Police have been stopping women on the streets and asking them to remove their headscarves and to sign pledges that they will not go back to wearing them.

The American University in Cairo, a foreign private university located in Egypt, banned the wearing of the headscarf in 2001 on the ground that face covering is inherently incompatible with the principles and practices of liberal education and that it presented security and

identification problems. The University justified the ban by invoking a 1994 Ministry of Education order, upheld by the Supreme Constitutional Court in 1996, which forbids the wearing of the veil at national educational institutions. Despite the order and the court ruling, enforcing the ban on the wearing of headscarves has proved exceedingly difficult. Scores of Egyptian students continue to wear the *hijab*. At the American University in Cairo the number of students wearing the headscarf has actually increased since the ban took effect.

The headscarf in historical and Islamic perspective

Long before Islam, the use of veiling for women appears to have existed in the Hellenistic-Byzantine era and among the Sasanians of Persia. In ancient Mesopotamia, the veil was regarded as a symbol of respectability and high social status for women. The practice of veiling and seclusion of women was a part of the Judaeo-Christian tradition. At the beginning of Christianity, Jewish women used to cover their head and face. Veiling is frequently mentioned in the Old Testament texts. Thus the Book of Genesis says “And

Rebekah lifted up her eyes and when she saw Isaac.....she took her veil and covered herself” (24:65; see also Isaiah 3:23; Corinthians 11:3-7).



Veiling is explicitly prescribed in the Quran and the Traditions of the Prophet and has been a matter of universal consensus among Muslim scholars and jurists over the past fourteen centuries of the Islamic era. Thus the Quran says: “Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and be modest. That is pure for them. And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and be modest and display of their adornment

only that which is apparent and to draw their head cover over their bosoms, and not to reveal their adornment save to their own husbands” (24:30-31). Another verse states: “O Prophet, tell thy wives and thy daughters, and the believing women, that they should cast their outer garments over their persons (when out of doors), that is most convenient, that they should be known (as such) and not be molested” (33:59). However, jurists differ whether it is obligatory for a woman to cover her face as well.

The Western perception of the veil

In Western perception, veiling is commonly associated with the seclusion of women, which in turn is linked to their subordination and to the patriarchal ideology. It is regarded as an infringement of women’s rights and their freedom. It is argued that the veil inhibits the integration of Muslims in Western societies. Unfortunately, all these assumptions are based on lack of understanding and prejudice. The veil is essentially a symbol of religious and cultural identity, privacy and self-respect.

European societies accord the highest importance to freedom and human rights. Muslim women in Western societies or elsewhere want to voluntarily wear the headscarf in the name of the same freedom which is such a major part of the European liberal tradition. How can

one profess freedom and liberalism and at the same time deny another individual or community the same right? How can one think of imposing the dress pattern and lifestyle of the majority population on minority groups while pretending to swear by democratic values? Banning the headscarf represents forced homogenization and thereby smacks of cultural totalitarianism.

SNAPSHOTS OF ISLAMIC LEGACY

Professor A. R. Momin

Islam and the globalization of science and technology

A great deal of hype and euphoria surrounds the process of globalization, which is hailed as the most distinctive feature of the present era. Undoubtedly, the scale, magnitude and reach of the processes subsumed under globalization are unprecedented in the annals of human history. However, it will not be correct to regard globalization as an altogether new phenomenon. In the past, vast empires, large-scale conquests, massive migrations of people, and the diffusion of ideas and beliefs as well as science and technology over large territories exhibited several features of globalization.

A movement for the globalization of science and philosophy was set in motion in the Islamic world during the medieval period. This movement was marked by extensive translations of scientific and philosophical works from Greece, India, Persia and Egypt, a synthesis of the researches of Muslim scientists and those of other lands, the establishment of scientific institutions, the employment of Arabic as the lingua franca of scientific research, translation and communication, and the creation of a community of scientists and translators from different religious, ethnic and religious backgrounds. Roger Bacon acknowledged that almost all of Aristotle's works were available only in Arabic translations, with only a small percentage having been translated into Latin. He asserted that without Arabic, Greek knowledge would have never reached the Europeans. Montgomery Watt has remarked that no people in the world translated from foreign languages as much as Muslims. George Sarton, the celebrated historian of science, has observed that, prior to the 15th century, almost all the works of classical writers were available only in Arabic.

Scientific institutions, such as observatories, scientific academies, medical colleges, libraries and hospitals, which were established by Muslim rulers and members of the nobility and supported through *waqf* endowments, played a highly important role in the globalization of science. The most remarkable scientific institution in the early centuries of the Islamic era was *Bayt al-Hikmah* founded by Caliph Al-Mamun in Baghdad in the early decades of the 9th century. It was in this institution that nearly the whole corpus of scientific and philosophical literature from Greece, Persia and India was rendered into Arabic.

The translators of scientific and philosophical works included not only Muslims but also Jews, Christians, Sabaeans, Magians and Hindus. One of the most prolific translators was Hunayn ibn Ishaq or Johannitus (d. 877), who was a Syrian Christian. It is significant to note that the seven volumes of Galen's *Anatomy* are extant only in the form of its Arabic translation by Hunayn ibn Ishaq. Ibn Maymun or Maimonides (d. 1204), a brilliant scientist and translator, was a Spanish rabbi. Other important translators were Thabit ibn Qurra (d. 901), who was a Magian, Abu Bishr Matta (d. 940) and Qusta ibn Luqa (d. 912), both Christians, and Ali ibn Abbas al-Majusi (d. 994), a Magian.

The scientific legacy of Islamic civilization greatly contributed to the European Renaissance. (See J. R. Hayes: *The Genius of Arab Civilization: Source of Renaissance*. Cambridge, Mass, 1983).

In his recent book *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (Penguin 2006), Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen has paid handsome tributes to the role of Islamic civilization in the globalization of science and technology. To quote him:

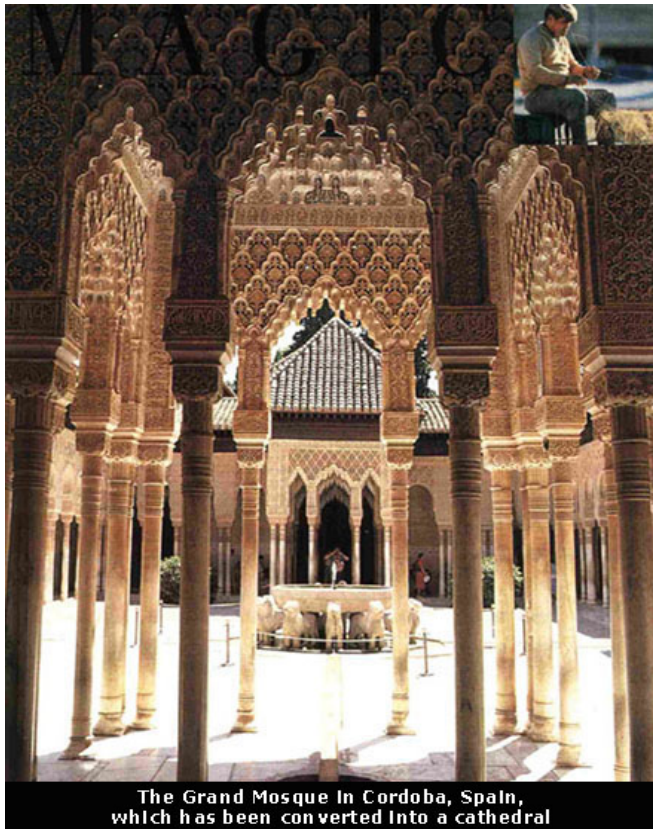
Muslim engineers were responsible for the development and use of the technology of irrigation in the form of *acequias* in Spain, drawing on the innovations they had introduced earlier in the dry lands in the Middle East. This allowed, more than a thousand years ago, the cultivation of crops, fruits and vegetables, and the pasturing of animals on what had earlier been completely dry European land. Indeed, Muslim technologists were in charge of this admirable technical job over many centuries.

Furthermore, Muslim mathematicians and scientists had a significant role in the globalization of technical knowledge through the movement of ideas across the Old World. For example, the decimal system and some early results in trigonometry went from India to Europe in the early years of the second millennium, transmitted through the works of Arab and Iranian mathematicians. Also, the Latin versions of the mathematical results of Indian mathematicians Aryabhata, Varahmihira and Brahmagupta, from their Sanskrit treatises produced between the fifth and seventh centuries appeared in Europe through two distinct steps, going first from Sanskrit to Arabic and then to Latin. *As leaders of innovative thought in that period in history, Muslim intellectuals were among the most committed globalizers of science and mathematics.* The religion of the people involved, whether Muslim or Hindu or Christian, made little difference to the scholarly commitments of these Muslim leaders of mathematics or science.

Similarly, many of the Western classics, particularly from ancient Greece, survived only through their Arabic translations, to be retranslated, mostly into Latin, in the early centuries of the second millennium, preceding the European Renaissance. The Arabic translations were originally made not, obviously, for preservation, but for contemporary use in the Arabic-speaking world—a world of some considerable expanse at the turn of the first millennium. (pp. 69-70, *emphasis added*)

Islam's multicultural legacy in Spain

The contribution of Islamic civilization to the promotion and advancement of knowledge, especially through an innovative amalgamation and creative synthesis of learning and science drawn from different sources, the creation of an environment of tolerance and accommodation, and to the onward march of human civilization—through the harvesting of nature's resources, science and medicine, engineering and technology, arts and crafts, architecture—constitutes one of the most illuminating chapters in human history. It is gratifying to note that there is now a growing recognition and appreciation of Islam's monumental role in the enrichment of human civilization.



The Grand Mosque In Cordoba, Spain,
which has been converted into a cathedral

In a speech given on September 26, 2001, Carly Fiorina, president of Hewlett Packard, observed:

When other nations were afraid of ideas, this civilization (of Islam) thrived on them, and kept them alive. When censors threatened to wipe out knowledge from past civilizations, this civilization kept the knowledge alive, and passed it on to others.....Although we are often unaware of our indebtedness to this civilization, its gifts are very much a part of our heritage. The technology industry would not exist without the contributions of Arab mathematicians. Leaders like (the Ottoman Emperor) Sulayman the Magnificent contributed to our notions of tolerance and civic leadership. And perhaps we can learn a lesson from his example: it was leadership based on meritocracy, not inheritance. It was leadership that harvested the full

capabilities of a very diverse population—that included Christian, Islamic and Jewish traditions.

One may add that the inspiration for these lofty ideals was provided by the teachings of the Holy Quran and the precepts of Prophet Muhammad. The Quran repeatedly urges Muslims to closely observe natural phenomena and to ponder over the mysteries of the universe and of the human psyche. It emphasizes the pursuit of knowledge as the key to all-round well-being and development. The Prophet regarded the acquisition of knowledge and learning as an obligation on every believer. He declared that “wisdom is (like) the lost animal of a Muslim; he should catch hold of it wherever he finds it.” He exhorted his followers to carry the torch of knowledge and enlightenment far and wide, and warned against concealing or withholding it. Islam opened the portals of knowledge to one and all, men and women, rich and poor, king and slave. This refreshingly open, dynamic and egalitarian approach to knowledge brought about far-reaching and revolutionary consequences not only for Muslims but also for human civilization as a whole.

Between the fifth and fifteenth centuries, when Europe was enveloped in the Dark Ages, the Iberian peninsula under Muslim rule witnessed a spectacular efflorescence of science and medicine, philosophy and literature, technology and engineering, art and architecture and, above all, of tolerance and multiculturalism where Muslims, Christians and Jews lived and worked together in unimaginable harmony. Samuel ha-Nagid, a Jewish rabbi, was appointed the vizier of the kingdom of Cordoba. He led his largely Muslim soldiers into battle, with prayers on his lips for the victory of his beloved land.

Amartya Sen, in his recent books *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (Penguin 2006) and *The Argumentative Indian* (Penguin 2005), has written that when Maimonides, the Jewish philosopher was forced to emigrate from an intolerant Europe in the 12th century, he found a tolerant refuge in the Arab world. His host, who gave him an honoured and influential position in his court in Cairo, was none other than Emperor Saladin (*Identity and Violence*, p. 66; *The Argumentative Indian*, p. 286). Sen quotes a contemporary writer Maria Rosa Menocal who says in her recent book *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance* (New York: Little Brown 2002) that by the 10th century, the achievement of Cordoba in Muslim-rule Spain in being “as serious a contender as Baghdad, perhaps more so, for the title of most civilized place on earth” was due to the constructive influence of the joint work of Caliph Abd al-Rahman III and his Jewish vizier Hasdai ibn Shaprut. Menocal argues that the position of Jews after the Muslim conquest “was in every respect an improvement, as they went from persecuted to protected minority” (quoted in *Identity and Violence*, p. 66).

It may be added that during the *Reconquista* (or Reconquest) the Spanish Queen Isabel and King Ferdinand expelled Muslims, Jews, and gypsies from Spain in 1492. Large numbers of Jews took shelter in Muslim lands. In Turkey they were received with open arms by the Mayor of Istanbul. It is significant to note that Ladino, a dialect spoken by the Spanish Jews, survived only in the eastern Mediterranean lands which were part of the Ottoman Empire.

Museo Vivo de Al-Andalus, a unique museum established by the distinguished Muslim scholar and statesman Roger Garaudy in Cordoba, brings out the cultural and intellectual legacy of Muslim Spain through modern audio-visual techniques.

Even today, Spanish tradition cannot be understood without the Islamic legacy and cultural heritage. Spanish language is replete with thousands of words of Arabic origin. Most of the family names as well as names of places and regions in Spain betray their Arabic origins. The regional division of Spain into 17 communities points to the continuing legacy of the Muslim period.

MULTICULTURALISM ON TRIAL

The exclusion of Muslims and the construction of national identity in Spain



R. Zapata-Barrero, Associate Professor of Political Theory, Grup de Recerca sobre Immigració i Innovació Política (GRIIP), Department of Social and Political Science, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona, Spain (ricard.zapata@upf.edu)

1. Political discourse on multiculturalism in Europe

In Europe, “circumstances of multiculturality” are mainly related to religion and the interrelation between Muslim communities and non-Muslim European citizens. Reflections on Muslim communities and political management of cultural pluralism necessitate an analysis of facts in political discourses. A reflection not so much on the *discourse of power*, but on the *power of discourse* is necessary. In this short essay I intend to offer a conceptual framework of why and how interpretations are constructed to manage cultural pluralism in general and regarding the Muslim communities in Spain in particular. The Spanish case demonstrates how different political traditions and powers employed discourse as a barrier for exclusion of the Muslim communities. The purpose of anti-Muslims measures is to avoid losing voters to the far right parties. This is the primary concern of many governments, the only intentional logic that directs the politic body. As such we are not in the realm of the *discourse of politics* but of the *politics of discourse*. Discourse becomes a political option, a common practice for most traditional European political parties, especially when they have to communicate a speech about cultural diversity. These *politics of discourse* aim to gain and maintain power, by securing the majority of votes through traditional and populist rhetoric.

This discursive strategy is mainly based not only on stereotypes and negative pictures of Muslim people, and other defense mechanism of the social structure, but on a simplistic, reductionist and monolithic interpretation of Muslim communities. Political discourse generates problems instead of solving them, fracturing society in two parts, pro and against Muslims. In citizens’ terms, the difference between Muslim and non-Muslim citizens becomes by itself an explanatory category.

It is true that we cannot say that a conflict arises every time there is contact between an immigrant/citizen of Muslim origin and a non-Muslim, but on the whole it is frequent for the Muslims to have serious problems performing their culture and religion in a public space originally created and occupied by non-Muslim citizens.ⁱ In short, we are faced with what would qualify as a structural problem of multiculturalism.ⁱⁱ There is a tendency to identify Muslims for what they are (their religious affiliation) rather than by what they do (like any other citizen).ⁱⁱⁱ These negative interpretations are the main variable explaining why contact zones are transformed into conflict zones. Conflicts related to cultural pluralism are a matter of interpretation. Indeed, one of the channels where this picture is produced and enforced is the media

which, consciously or unconsciously, conveys at least three negative pictures of Muslims that serve to legitimate racist and xenophobic attitudes: Muslims are linked to Bin Laden, with criminal activities, and inspire an immediate threat; Arab people are opposed to democracy because their Muslim practice violates the most elementary human rights; and finally, as a corollary, Islam is identified with barbarism.

What makes the Muslim community a problem in Europe is then the distorted and hostile discourse on Islam that sprung up from historical misrepresentations, enforced by today's misperceptions propagated by the media. Despite the fact that these images are based on gross generalizations and stereotypes, they have shown durability and continuity over time to the extent that they have dominated the European discourse as facts. The main argument to be defended is then that from an homogeneous and simplistic view of Islam and the Muslim Community, which nourishes reactive discourse with populist rhetoric and conservatism discourse based on tradition rhetoric, a reflection on the politics of discourse is urgent, a political discourse pluralizing the Muslim European citizenry and incorporating them within the European historical path.

2. The populist rhetoric and the rhetoric of tradition governing discourse towards Muslims

From a social psychological point of view we know that when there is social fear of an unknown community, citizens tend to search for arguments to explain their feelings. These arguments help them to rationalize their emotions. The arguments citizens currently find in the public arena come mainly from the media, tradition, and political discourse. The argument to be defended is not that Islam is a source of social and political instability, but it is the perception that citizens have of Islam and the interpretation politicians intentionally and tacitly follow that are the main sources of instability. For instance, it is not the presence of a mosque in a city that provokes instability, but the perception that citizens have of a mosque which transforms this previous contact zone into a conflict zone.

In most surveys, the media are seen to consolidate the perception that Muslim communities are not only extremely different from us but can also endanger our values and current ways of life. When the media try to correct this tendency, they are inclined to go to the other extreme and build an exotic icon of the Muslim, close to the Rousseauesque universe, as an uncivilized but kind-natured human being, who reminds us of the philosophical discourses after the conquest of America in the 16th and 17th centuries.^{iv} In reality, the public's perception of Muslims is based on media discourse rather than direct contact. The *politics of discourse* nourishes these arguments. It builds a re-active and conservative discourse against the cultural and religious demands of pluralism. From the viewpoint of the re-active discourse, cultural pluralism may transform the various spheres of life. Circumstances of multiculturalism are seen as negative. Two types of rhetoric occupy the political space: the populist rhetoric and the rhetoric of the tradition.

The populist rhetoric uses the argument of democracy in a way that appeals to and satisfies citizens. But in reality it appeals only to a sector of the society in the name of the whole society. It creates conflicts of interests between the societal majority (the non-Muslim citizens) and the minority (the Muslim immigrants/citizens). This rhetoric is nourished with

the “popular” referent, linking it with the security and the maintenance of the socio-economic level.^v Populism is, in fact, “democracy badly understood.” It supposedly addresses the interest of the whole society while in reality it addresses only the interest of a sector of the society (non-Muslim citizens), but not the Muslim citizens.

Populism is a discourse that invertebrates and fractures society. The populist rhetoric has a “re-active” function, since its arguments are built on the “complaints” of common citizens with the objective of translating them into social action against other sectors of the society, confusing the reality and the ideal of the society. Populism has an “essentialist” component, since the interests and needs of the non-Muslim citizens are seen as unchangeable, and as the only criteria to be politically considered in managing “circumstances of multiculturalism.” It uses the perception of one part of the citizenry as democratic truth. It has also a dualistic logic given arguments to the extreme that the needs of some (non-Muslims or Muslims) are seen as incompatible with the needs (social, cultural, economic) of others.^{vi}

The rhetoric of the Tradition does not have the interest as reference framework (the interest of the Muslim/non-Muslim citizens), but a set of beliefs and values homogenizing the society. Before the link between security and maintenance of the socio-economic level that characterizes to the populist rhetoric this conservative discourse produces basically arguments based on identity. Its basic framework is that the tradition, understood as a set of established values and beliefs having persisted over several generations and as process of transmission of uses and customs from generation to generation, ^{vii}breaks with cultural pluralism. Tradition is a defense to maintain the sacred chain of the self and his/her history. It has, then, a vital function in the political body, the sacred purpose to maintain social cohesion. This new rhetoric is opposed to the process of change in which we are, since cultural pluralism affects the values of the most essential tradition: values tied to identity and community. Before the process of structural change provoked by the politics of cultural pluralism, this rhetoric seek, in words of Hirshman (who analyses the rhetoric of re-action in the 19th and 20th century provoked in the process of acquisition of rights), to “turn the clock back”^{viii}

But this it is not a historical exception. In all processes of structural change, beginning with the French revolution, a conservative re-active line of thought is generated. Indeed, the conservative tradition began to produce its arguments inspired by the context of the French structural revolutionary change. The framework of reference of E. Burke, for example, was to defend the respect of the tradition of the English revolution set against the French one, which broke literally the chain of historical transmission.^{ix} This rhetoric of the new conservatism takes tradition as the main producer of arguments. In our identity terms, here enter the arguments to maintain our Apostolic, Catholic-Roman, and Christian tradition, set against other religious sources of identity. Tradition is our cultural *alter ego*. It nourishes the politics against the demands of cultural pluralism. Tradition is the last source of recognition and plays an almost sacred role, since from some initial rational arguments we can penetrate easily to strong emotions directly related to our identity.

3. Maurophobia and Spanish identity-building process

Of all immigrant groups, the Moroccan immigrant best represents “the cultural other”, because neither language nor religion is shared with Spaniards. Muslim presence and practices moreover have constantly been associated with negative news in the media, thereby leading to “Maurophobia”. Islam has historically been excluded from the formation of the Spanish (Christian) identity (R. Zapata-Barrero, 2006). This is why there are some discourses that tends to view Moroccan immigration as a threat to the Spanish identity, Moroccan as potential “cultural invaders,” or even as a new Arab invasion (J. de Lucas, 2002; 23-48), or the re-Islamization of Spain (G. Martín Muñoz, 1996; 9-16). Immigration has been incorporated into the political discourse at the expense of one specific ethnic group: Moroccans.

This aspect of Spanish nation-building is also nourished by media, which constantly associate the most negative news with Muslim presence and practices. The Spanish authorities that draw on these historical stereotypes to restrict the public space available to the Muslim community also drive the presentation of a “process of Islamization” of Spain. In this situation, the construction of Muslim facilities acquires vital importance, and so too is the Muslim presence in schools and the redesigning of cemeteries.

Since the tragedy of El Ejido, in February 2000,^x but surely also as a consequence of the attacks in New York (11 September 2001), in Madrid (11 March 2004), and in London (7 July 2005), there has been an explicit and intentional policy favoring Central and Eastern European and South American immigrants over Moroccans. Moroccans were until recently the most numerous foreign nationality in Spain (about 21.8% of the foreign population), followed by Ecuadorians, who accounted for 7.6%. Although the latest statistics (2004) show that Ecuadorians have surpassed Moroccans.^{xi} Moreover, the first bilateral agreements for importing immigrant workers were signed with Ecuador and Poland. The only logical explanation for this policy is based on race and the Christian identity, i.e., the protection of the Spanish identity against those viewed as potential “cultural invaders,” or even as a new Arab invasion,^{xii} or re-Islamisation of Spain.^{xiii}

There is a historical Spanish tradition of Maurophobia present in the social and political discourses, and it is used to legitimate citizens’ attitudes against Muslim immigration in Spain.^{xiv} This Spanish identity-building is also nourished by media which constantly remind us that the most negative news are related to Muslims’ presence and practices. Islam has historically been excluded from the formation of the Judeo-Christian Spanish identity in which the formation of a Christian “us” has been opposed to an Islamic “other.”^{xv} The process of Islamisation of Spain through the presence of Muslim immigrants is also driven by the Spanish authorities who draw on these historical stereotypes to restrict the public space available to the Muslim community, forcing its members to close on themselves and search for their own identity, since the identity of Spanish citizenship is not open to them. In this situation, the construction of Muslim facilities acquires vital importance and so, too, the Muslim presence in schools and the redesigning of cemeteries to allow for Muslim funeral rites.

These evidences are the premises for an analysis linking the Muslim community and the Spanish tradition. The analysis is typically approached from two different perspectives. One perspective argues that Islam belongs to the Spanish cultural tradition and identity. The other argues that Islam is alien to the Spanish cultural tradition and identity, which is based on the Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian heritage. Consequently each perspective employs different form of political discourse. Indeed, Spain has two ways of managing differences related to muslim community

The first approach defends the idea that there is one tradition rather than two. It demonstrates that Spain is the only Western European context in which the Islamic tradition developed a cultural society and a political system that lasted centuries. Spain is the only country in Western Europe to have been Islamized for so long (we know that the Balkans and Sicily were also Islamised). Thus, this perspective gives rise to a political discourse emphasizing what is common.

The second perspective portrays two separate traditions that have been historically at odds. It follows a political discourse that stresses what is different between the Muslim and Spanish traditions, what separates the two traditions. It has also constructed a hostile tradition by drawing a negative picture of the Moroccan, synthesized in the figure of “the Moor” (“*el moro*”). The main line of this argument is that current Spanish tradition is the result of the Christian victory over Islam. Muslim people are by nature unable to be integrated into a society and a public sphere that is replete with Catholic customs. The Spanish public sphere is structurally Catholic.

This historical iconography of the Moors belongs to Spanish tradition and is at the foundation of the Spanish identity and nation building. Two main periods can be identified in the process of Spanish nation-building: The period of the “Reconquista” and Catholics Kings in the XVth century, and the critical period of a loss of Spanish identity at the end of the XIXth century, when Spain decline of main colonies, mainly from Latin-America forced to rethink what does Spanish means? Having lost politically population and territory control through colonies, A building of a new notion of community arise, with the notion of Hispanidad, through which there were a strategy to sep culturally an homogeneous community which was lost politically through the period of de-colonization. A sense of belonging to a broader “Hispanic” community was built. These facts show that in Spain, tradition matters. We cannot understand the citizens’ perception of – and attitude against – the Moroccan community in Spain today only in terms of sociological and political variables and without historical arguments.

Since the period of the *Reconquista* or Reconquest, when the Spanish Queen Isabel and King Ferdinand, known as the Catholic Kings, using mainly Christian arguments, expelled the Muslims (together with the Jews and the gypsies) from Spain in 1492. The presence of the kingdom of Al Andalus over eight centuries (from 711 to 1492) finished in fact in 1609 with the expulsion of the *moriscos* (that is, Muslims who converted to Christianity and stayed in Spain after the *Reconquista*; today we would call them “Spaniards of Muslim origin”). If this is the beginning, other phases of Spanish history contribute to this negative picture of the

Moors. E. Martín Corrales in an excellent work tracing this historical construction of the Moors, reminds us that the propaganda of the *Reconquista* worked to disqualify and satanise the Islamic religion.^{xvi} As well as emphasising some ethnic and physical characteristics of these believers, it allowed for the formation of a corpus of stereotypes and clearly degrading clichés (depicting them as impure, treasonous, false, evil, perfidious, cruel, cowardly, lewd and so on). The process of negative construction of the image of the Muslims intensified from the 16th to 18th centuries, when Muslim corsairs filled the ports of the southern Mediterranean with Christian slaves.

Symbolically, then, it is meaningful that the Spanish identity has been codified as a negation of this historical debt, since the Sephardic Jews were expelled from Spain at the same time as the Muslims and gypsies, in the symbolic year of 1492, the official date of the beginning of the conquest of America and the global expansion of Spanish Catholicism and messianism (indeed the first global politics even conducted). The politics of the so-called Catholic Kings has many elements of what today we would refer to as *ethnic cleansing*. Behind this, there is also the politically constructed idea of *Hispanidad*, developed at the beginning of the 20th century, precisely to counterweigh the loss of the last colonies in America (particularly Cuba in 1898). This idea of *Hispanidad* was also used under the Franco regime (1940-1975) to refer to a community of people linked together by linguistic and religious criteria. Within this framework, *Hispanidad* was clearly used politically to build a culturally homogeneous society and the discourse of exclusion.

Instead of having a socializing and pedagogic effect, this political discourse generates divergence and instability in the society. Politicians not only avoid talking about immigration, but when they do so, their discursive behavior is alarmist and even contains populist components linking the Muslim community to insecurity and social instability. The reality is that in Spain there is an apparent absence of integrationist politics, a lack of political will to include Muslims in the public sphere. In an integrationist framework that favors the sentiment of social belonging, Islam could develop in Spain, and in general in Europe, without conflict. Instead, it tends to turn into a closed and hostile space where Muslims search for their identity and their community.^{xvii}

This political discourse generates divergence and instability in society. Politicians not only avoid talking about immigration, but when they do so, their discursive behaviour is alarmist and even contains populist components linking the Muslim community to insecurity and social instability. Moroccan immigrants threaten our culture and democracy (therefore in order to integrate we have to change their culture). The image of the Moroccan is based on inferiority: physically, economically and culturally; Migration is criminalized in the press by often naming nationality in crime and linking Moroccan to terrorism. Almost all press is about the attempts of Moroccan immigrants to come to Spain and make living.

Language and religion are the only criteria to explain this shift in immigration management. The cultural and religious criteria are not new, and have already been used for the formal selection of immigrants. It is even said that it is not immigrant selection that is taking place, but really an “ethnic filter” and even a “Darwinist politics of immigration”.^{xviii} In general terms, we would say that the labour market attracts immigrants, but politics selects them using

colonial and national identity criteria. In the management of its new multicultural society, Spain is currently at the beginning of some sort of *Hispanidad* revival.

Hispanidad is a political term that was created precisely to comprise the whole Spanish area of influence, designating a linguistic (Spanish) and religious (Catholic) community and creating a sense of belonging, to the exclusion of non-Spanish speakers, atheists, Masons, Jews, and Muslims. In a process The Franco regime (1940-1975) reconstructed this term as a symbol of homogeneity and unity, as a cohesive society with the slogan *Una, Grande y Libre* (One, Great and Free).^{xix} This *Hispanidad* was a political construction separating people in a Manichaean fashion.^{xx} Those following the regime were good citizens, those having some doubts about it (i.e., republican) were the bad citizens. This political construction of *Hispanidad* aimed at creating the notion of the Hispanic race in order to obtain a sentiment of loyalty and patriotism. Patriotism, race, and religion were an explosive mixture that dominated the conservative political discourse (and academic arena) for the first half of the 20th century,^{xxi} and legitimized the Francist regime.^{xxii}

This binary logic still exists today, although with a rather different dimension. The bad citizens are those who do not speak Spanish and hold beliefs other than Catholic: Moroccans are the first candidates and are constantly used in a political discourse that reminds us of this imagery of *Hispanidad*. Society's perception of immigration is usually that of Muslims as a religious minority. At the same time, there are conservative discourses on European identity and civilization that advocate Christian tradition and politically construct Islam as anti-European and Christian.

To conclude

The presence of Muslims and their demands for recognition has sparked an extensive political rhetoric. Despite the various political and cultural circumstances across European countries, Spanish political rhetoric has two common features. It is largely grounded on interpretations based on tradition and current gross generalizations. Second, it is calculated to win a majority of voters by deploying rhetoric basically grounded in traditional values and populist practices. Such rhetoric has an enormous negative effect on Muslims' integration, by drawing on past Muslim-Christian relationships and present global political conflicts and wars as to assemble a violent and monolithic image of Islam.

The Spanish case demonstrates how Islam has been excluded from the Spanish Judeo-Christian tradition, despite the fact that an important and rich Islamic tradition lasted in Spain for eight hundreds years. Spanish political identity has been constructed against Muslims for centuries, following at least two main basic dimensions: Spanish language and Catholic religion (*Hispanidad*). History and colonialism also matter as they nourish this rhetoric of tradition in Spain. Today, Muslims in Spain are seen primarily through the hostile prism of the moors.

To sum up, politicians have yet to accept and publicly recognize the cultural and religious diversity of their societies. The only way to solve the problem is for politicians to treat new Muslim citizens in an equal and respected manner like any other European citizen, regardless

of religion, place of origin, and color. To do this, however, first and foremost, requires a responsible rhetoric free from the stereotypes and distortion of Islam and Muslims seen in the rhetoric of tradition.

Review-Essay**JESUS, THE SON OF MARY***Professor A. R. Momin*

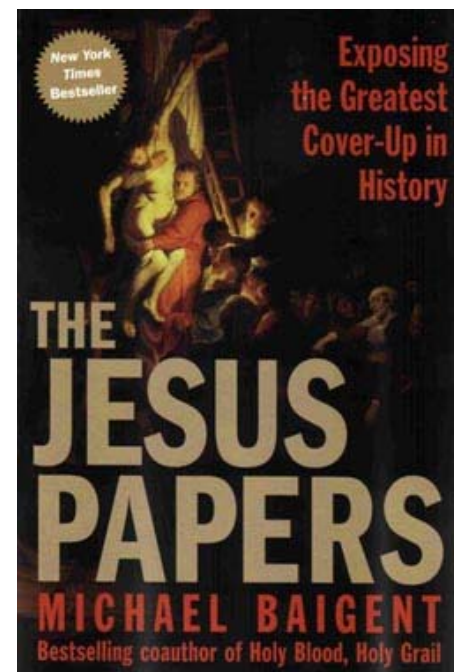
The Jesus Papers: Exposing the Greatest Cover-Up in History, by Michael Baigent. New York: HarperCollins, 2006, 321 pp.

The present era of globalization represents a curious mixture of paradoxes and contradictions. Thus, on the one hand the process of secularization is steadily on the increase, especially in large parts of Europe. On the other hand, there is an unmistakable resurgence of religious consciousness and fundamentalism—of different hues and kinds—across a large number of countries, including the United States. The religious market in the US, for example, is experiencing a huge, unprecedented boom. The market for religious books, or books dealing with religious or quasi-religious issues, in the US grew by 37% in 2003. The Purpose-Driven Life by Rick Warren, an evangelical preacher in the US, is the best-selling hard cover book in American history, with more than 25 million copies sold.

For the greater part of its history, or at least since 325 A.D. when the Nicene Creed was adopted as the official dogma of the Church, Christianity has been Christocentric. Following the emergence of modern science, explorations and discoveries, and the beginnings of the scientific outlook in the Renaissance, some scholars began to focus on a critical study of the Bible in the light of scientific evidence. Some scholars, such as Wilhelm Bousset, Bruno Bauer and Kalthoff, went to the extent of asserting that there had never been a Jesus of Nazareth and that Christ of the New Testament was a mythical figure.

On the other hand, the eminent Lutheran theologian and New Testament scholar Rudolf Bultmann (d.1976) convincingly demonstrated, in the light of comparative religious history and a critical study of the New Testament texts, that the historicity of Jesus cannot be denied, although it appears that the figure of Christ became shrouded in myths and legends drawn from Greek and Roman sources. Bultmann emphasized the need for demythologizing Jesus. The eminent Orientalist and archaeologist W. F. Albright pointed out that innumerable elements of pagan mythology and folklore—such as the rite of baptism, descent to the underworld, disappearance for three days and eventual ascension to heaven—found their way into Christianity.

In recent years there has come about a renewed interest in the life of Jesus Christ as seen in the light of comparative religious history, archaeology, and a critical study of Old and New Testament texts. Michael Baigent's book (coauthored with Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln



and published in 1982) *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, which suggested that Jesus and Mary Magdalene had married and founded a holy bloodline, became a bestseller. Dan Brown's novel *The Da Vinci Code*, which drew upon Baigent's book, became an international publishing phenomenon. A film based on the novel became hugely popular—and also controversial—across large parts of the world. The book under review has already become a New York Times bestseller.

Jesus and the New Testament

Unfortunately, there is no evidence of any texts or documents, historical records or inscriptions dating back to the time of Jesus which could directly throw some light on his life and mission. The only available sources of information on Jesus's life and times are the New Testament texts, particularly the Gospels. Over seventy gospels are known to have existed in the past, but only four of them have been authenticated by the Church and the rest declared as apocryphal. The canonical Gospels—those of Matthew, John, Mark and Luke—are based on two manuscripts, namely, Codex Vaticanus (which is kept in the Vatican Library) and Codex Sinaiticus (preserved in the British Museum), which date from the fourth century A.D. Furthermore, these are Greek translations from the original Aramaic texts, which are lost.

Unfortunately, the Gospels appear to be fragmentary, anecdotal and abound in inconsistencies. Thus, according to Matthew's Gospel (2:1), Jesus was born before 4 B.C., while Luke's Gospel (2:1-7) mentions 6 A.D. as the year of his birth. Baigent says that one cannot say how much fantasy is incorporated into the New Testament. The texts, he says, are inconsistent, incomplete, garbled and biased (p. 123). He quotes Canon Alfred Leslie, a prominent figure in the Church of England, as saying that "there is nothing in the Gospels one could be certain about" (p.10). Baigent mentions that William Inge, Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, was once asked to write a treatise on the life of Jesus. He declined, saying that there was no solid evidence on the basis of which any thing reliable could be written about Jesus's life and works (p. 11).

Baigent argues that soon after Jesus disappeared from the scene there began the manipulation of his story that ultimately created a tradition centred upon Jesus rather than upon God (p. 64). In other words, Christianity became identical with Christology. He adds that "the Jewish origins of Jesus became subsumed within an increasingly influential pagan context introduced by converts to Christianity from among the Greeks and Romans. A number of pagan sites, rituals and festivals—such as the birth of Mithras on 25th December—were appropriated by the Church. These pagan influences drew Christianity and its view of Jesus away from the Jewish context in the succeeding centuries. "The original Jesus movement," he says, "was taken over by a Jesus mythology" (p. 261). Baigent quotes several Old and New Testament scholars in support of his argument. St. Paul played a major role in disembedding Christianity from its Jewish moorings and in the development of a Jesus mythology. It is significant that Paul never knew Jesus nor did he ever meet him. And he did not get on with the messianic Jewish community in Jerusalem. In fact, Baigent says, the Jerusalem community did not trust Paul (p.240).



The Dead Sea Scrolls

The most interesting and absorbing part of The Jesus Papers is the section which deals with the Dead Sea Scrolls. Between 1947 and 1956 hundreds of documents (estimated between 825 and 870) written in the Aramaic language on papyrus were discovered in eleven caves near Khirbet Qumran on the shores of the Dead Sea in Jordan. In the course of time most of these scrolls were purchased by the Israeli government and are now on display at the Shrine of the Book in Jerusalem. In the course of excavations at the ruins in Qumran, coins and pottery were found, which are dated from the beginning of the Christian period to the end of the Jewish War in 70 A.D.

Baigent has previously published (with Richard Leigh) a book *The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception* in 1991. He reveals in the present book that a great deal of

mystery, intrigue and manipulation has surrounded the acquisition and publication of the Dead Sea Scrolls, in which a group of scholars and the Church were involved. While some of the texts were published relatively quickly, others took more than forty years. Baigent points out that “there was a growing suspicion that Catholic scholars who were entrusted with the responsibility of preparing the texts for publication were holding back material detrimental to the tenets of the Catholic Church” (p. 256). The existence of some scrolls was kept a secret. One of them was somehow leaked to a popular journal and published after more than thirty years. In 1991 the complete set of the Dead Sea Scrolls at the Huntington Library in California was released. How is it that so much of intrigue, manipulation and politics surrounded the Dead Sea Scrolls?

The reasons given by Baigent are startling. He points out that the Dead Sea Scrolls pose a formidable challenge to Pauline or Trinitarian Christianity in that they cast grave doubts on the uniqueness and divinity of Jesus, which has been a cardinal tenet of the Church for the past 1600 years. The scrolls, he says, “prove that you cannot disentangle Christianity from messianic Judaism, which had no concept of a divine messiah.”

Baigent points out that the Dead Sea Scrolls pose a formidable challenge to Pauline or Trinitarian Christianity in that they cast grave doubts on the uniqueness and divinity of Jesus, which has been a cardinal tenet of the Church for the past 1600 years. The scrolls, he says,

“prove that you cannot disentangle Christianity from messianic Judaism, which had no concept of a divine messiah”

(p. 260). Baigent reveals that it is for this reason that the Vatican had hidden some of the scrolls for many years, adding that the Vatican has a history of acquiring and destroying writings that run counter to its teachings (p. 89). Furthermore, writes Baigent, the scrolls expose the deep theological clash between the Jerusalem messianic community and Paul, who never knew Jesus (p. 259-60).

Another plausible reason, which Baigent does not mention but which has been suspected by Muslim scholars for quite some time, is that some of the scrolls foretell the prophecy of Muhammad (may peace and blessings of God be upon him), which is alluded to in the Gospels as well (John 16:7-14). It is significant to note that some of the scrolls, especially the Book of Enoch, mention the raising up of a prophet like Moses, as well as a royal Messiah and a priestly Messiah.

Jesus, the Son of God?

The belief that Jesus was the Son of God, which was ratified by the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D., has been an inseparable part of Christianity for centuries. However, some Christian sects, such as the Unitarians and the Basilidians, did not subscribe to the Trinitarian doctrine. The words ‘son of God’ and ‘sons of God’ are metaphorically mentioned in several places in the Old and New Testament texts (Creation 6:1-5; Psalms 89:19; Isaiah 63:16 Jeremiah 31:9; Matthew 5:44-45). In Exodus (4:22), God says that Israel is my son, my first-born. Chapter 3 in the Gospel of Luke, which describes the genealogy of Jesus, says that Jesus is the son of Joseph and of Adam, who was the Son of God. The Book of Enoch (71:1) speaks of the “holy sons of God.” Baigent argues that even the Gospels fail to support the Nicene Creed, and quotes an eminent New Testament scholar Joseph Fitzmyer as saying that “the Gospels have not so presented that claim” (p. 260).

The most conclusive and sensational evidence against the assumed divinity of Jesus presented by Baigent, which constitutes the piece de resistance of the book, relates to the existence of two papyrus documents bearing an inscription in Aramaic, which he saw with an Israeli businessman in the 1990s.

The documents, consisting of two letters, together with some artifacts were discovered by the Israeli businessman in the old quarter of Jerusalem in 1961. Some archaeologists and Old Testament scholars, who were consulted by the businessman, dated the letters at about 34 A.D. The letters were addressed to the Jewish court, the Sanhedrin, by someone who called himself bani mashiha—translated by Baigent as the Messiah of the Children of Israel.

<p>Baigent points out that the Dead Sea Scrolls pose a formidable challenge to Pauline or Trinitarian Christianity in that they cast grave doubts on the uniqueness and divinity of Jesus, which has been a cardinal tenet of the Church for the past 1600 years. The scrolls, he says, “prove that you cannot disentangle Christianity from messianic Judaism, which had no concept of a divine messiah.”</p>

The writer of the letters was accused of calling himself “Son of God” and had been asked to defend himself against this heresy before the Jewish court. In the first letter, the messiah explains that what he meant was not that he was “God” but that the “Spirit of God” was in him—not that he was physically the Son of God. He added that everyone who felt similarly filled with this divine “spirit” was also a “son of God.” In other words, the writer explicitly states that he is not divine. Baigent believes that the messiah of the letter is none other than Jesus. He writes that while listening to this story, he was struck by the similarity with an incident described in the Gospel of John (10:33-35) where Jesus is accused by the Jews of blasphemy, of claiming to be God.

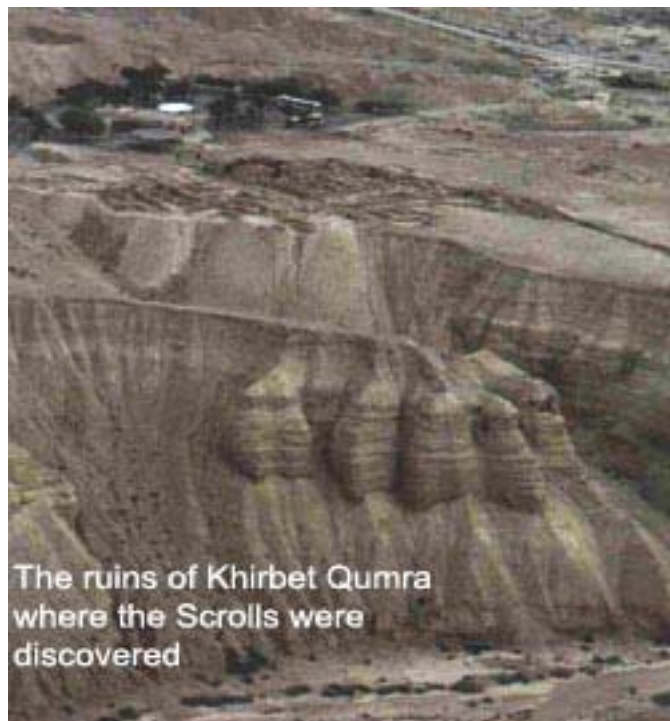
There seems to be some problem with the translation of the words *bani mashiha*. According to the grammatical structure of Semitic languages, *bani mashiha* would mean “Children of the Messiah,” which implies that the letter could not have been written by Jesus (the Messiah) himself. This raises the possibility, if the documents are genuine and date back to the time of Jesus, that they could have been written by Jesus’s disciples on his behalf or on his suggestion. This, however, does not diminish or dilute the revolutionary import of the documents.

The news of the existence of these letters reached Pope John XXIII, who sent word to the Israeli experts asking for these documents to be destroyed. The Israeli businessman refused to comply with this but made a promise that he would not publish the letters for the next 25 years. At the time Baigent met him twenty-five years had long expired but he still refused to release the documents because he felt that releasing them would cause problems between the Vatican and Israel (pp. 269-70).

Crucifixion

Another central dogma of the Church is the crucifixion of Jesus. However, since early times some Christian sects did not believe that Jesus died on the cross. Baigent points out that there are evident contradictions in the Gospels in respect of the alleged crucifixion of Jesus. He refers to a statement by Irenaeus in the late second century A.D., in which he complains about the beliefs of an Egyptian Gnostic, Basilides, who taught that Jesus had been substituted during his journey to Golgotha, and that this substitute, Simon of Cyrene, had died in Jesus’s stead (p. 127).

Baigent mentions an interesting incident related to Canon Alfred Leslie Lilley (d. 1948), Chancellor of Hereford Cathedral. Lilley was a highly regarded expert on medieval French and was often consulted on difficult translation work. In the early 1890s he was requested by



a former student of his to travel to the Seminary of Saint Sulpice on the outskirts of Paris to advise on the translation of a mysterious document. These documents were in medieval French and had once been in the possession of the Cathars in the south of France in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, although they were much older. The Cathars were one of the ascetic Christian sects in the Middle Ages which professed faith in an angelic Christ who did not die on the cross. These documents were translated from an earlier document from Jerusalem dating from the first century A.D. According to these documents, which were deciphered by Lilley who thought that they were authentic and extraordinary, Jesus survived the crucifixion and he was alive in 45 A.D. Subsequently the documents changed hands for a large sum of money and eventually landed up, under mysterious circumstances, in Rome where they were destroyed (pp. 9-10). Baigent quotes Hugh Schonfield, the author of *The Passover Plot* (which was first published in 1965 and since then has sold over six million copies in 18 languages), who suggests that Jesus was drugged—sedated on the cross such that he appeared dead but could be revived later, after he had been taken down and therefore could have survived (p. 127). Baigent reckons that “Jesus was taken down from the cross, apparently lifeless but in reality unconscious, and taken to a private tomb where medicines could be used to revive him. He would then be whisked away from the scene” (p. 129).

Baigent quotes Hugh Schonfield, the author of *The Passover Plot* (which was first published in 1965 and since then has sold over six million copies in 18 languages), who suggests that Jesus was drugged—sedated on the cross such that he appeared dead but could be revived later, after he had been taken down and therefore could have survived (p. 127). Baigent reckons that “Jesus was taken down from the cross, apparently lifeless but in reality unconscious, and taken to a private tomb where medicines could be used to revive him. He would then be whisked away from the scene” (p. 129).

Surviving the crucifixion was difficult, but not impossible, says Baigent. The celebrated historian Josephus reports that he came upon three of his former colleagues among a large group of crucified captives. One of them survived (p. 127). According to the Gospels, Jesus was crucified between two other men, described as thieves in the English translation. In the light of circumstantial evidence, there could be two possibilities in this situation: either someone else was crucified in Jesus’s place (as the Basilidians believed), or he was crucified but survived the ordeal.

In a television programme called ‘Did Jesus Die?’ broadcast by the BBC in 2004, the eminent New Testament scholar and commentator Elaine Pagels referred to Schonfield’s

Baigent quotes Hugh Schonfield, the author of *The Passover Plot* (which was first published in 1965 and since then has sold over six million copies in 18 languages), who suggests that Jesus was drugged—sedated on the cross such that he appeared dead but could be revived later, after he had been taken down and therefore could have survived (p. 127). Baigent reckons that “Jesus was taken down from the cross, apparently lifeless but in reality unconscious, and taken to a private tomb where medicines could be used to revive him. He would then be whisked away from the scene” (p. 129).

book *The Passover Plot* (which suggests that Jesus was sedated on the cross and that he was removed quite early and therefore could well have survived) and concluded, “That’s certainly a possibility” (p. 128). Baigent is of the view that after the aborted crucifixion Jesus went to Egypt with his wife Mary Magdalene.

Baigent refers, in passing, to a legend which says that after surviving the crucifixion, Jesus traveled to Kashmir in India, where he breathed his last. The shrine of Yus Asaph in Kashmir, according to the legend, is in reality the grave of Jesus.

Jesus in the Islamic Tradition

Jesus Christ (may peace and blessings of God be upon him) is mentioned in the Quran 25 times, and as Masih (messiah) 11 times. He is also referred to as the Word of God (4:171). Islam is the only religion in the world which affirms the prophecy of Jesus and makes a belief in his prophecy (as well as in that of all other prophets) an essential part of its creed. Unfortunately, the Gospels tell us little about the early life of Jesus or about Mary. The Quran provides certain important data about Mary (Maryam in Arabic) and her family and about Jesus’s birth, which are not available in the Gospels. According to the Quran, Imran was the father of Mary and the grandfather of Jesus, who belonged to a highly respectable family. The third chapter of the Quran is named after Imran’s family.

One of the distinguished commentators of the Quran, Ibn Kathir, traces Mary’s descent to the prophet Solomon. Mary’s mother, Hannah, who was childless, made a vow that if she conceived and delivered a child she would dedicate it to the Temple. After a while Mary was born. She was the only child of her parents. After a few years Mary was entrusted to the care of Zakariya, who was her mother’s sister’s husband. When Mary came of age she began devoting herself to the worship of God in a corner of the Temple. She is mentioned 34 times in the Quran and described as an extremely virtuous and pious woman (3: 37-42). In fact, one of the chapters of the Quran is named after her. The Quran says: “Every time that he (Zakariya) entered (Mary’s) enclosure to see her, he found her supplied with sustenance (such as fruits). He said (in amazement): O Mary! Wherefrom (comes) this to you? She said: “From God, for God provides sustenance to whom He pleases, without measure” (3:37). The Quran says that angels used to visit Mary. “Behold! The angels said: “O Mary, God has chosen you and purified you—chosen you above the women of all nations” (Quran 3:42).

The Birth of Jesus

The Quran affirms immaculate conception and provides a moving account of Mary’s agony. “Behold! The angels said: “O Mary, God gives you glad tidings of a Word from Him; his name will be Jesus, the Son of Mary, held in honour in this world and in the Hereafter and of (the company of) those nearest to God. He shall speak to the people in infancy and in maturity. And he shall be (of the company) of the righteous. She said: “O my Lord! How shall I have a son when no man has touched me? He said: “Even so, God creates what He wills.....And God will teach him the Book and wisdom, the Torah and the Gospel” (Quran 3: 45-48).

“Behold! The angels said: “O Mary, God gives you glad tidings of a Word from Him; his name will be Jesus, the Son of Mary, held in honour in this world and in the Hereafter and of (the company of) those nearest to God. He shall speak to the people in infancy and in maturity. And he shall be (of the company) of the righteous. She said: “O my Lord! How shall I have a son when no man has touched me? He said: “Even so, God creates what He wills.....And God will teach him the Book and wisdom, the Torah and the Gospel” (Quran 3: 45-48).

When the time to deliver the baby drew nearer, Mary retired to a remote place. The Quran says: “And the pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a palm-tree. She cried (in anguish): “Ah, would that I had died before this; would that I had been a thing forgotten.” But (a voice) called out to her from beneath the palm-tree: “Grieve not, for your Lord has provided a rivulet beneath you. And shake towards yourself the trunk of the palm-tree; it will let fall fresh ripe dates upon you. So eat and drink and cool (your) eye. And if you do see any man, say, ‘I have vowed a fast to (God) Most Gracious, and this day will I enter into no talk with any human being.’ At length she brought the (babe) to her people, carrying him (in her arms). They said: “O Mary, truly an amazing thing has you brought. O sister of Aaron, your father was not a man of evil, nor your mother a woman unchaste.” But she pointed to the babe. They said: “How can we talk to one who is a baby in the cradle?” He said: “I am indeed a servant of God. He has given me revelation and made me a Prophet. And He has made me blessed wherever I be, and has enjoined on me prayer and charity as long as I live (19:23-31). Ibn Kathir, one of the commentators of the Quran, mentions that soon after Jesus’s birth Mary traveled to Egypt and stayed there for about twelve years.

The Quran describes many of the miracles performed by Jesus. The Quran emphasizes that, like all other prophets, Jesus preached pure monotheism (5:116; 3:51; 5:72). The Quran explicitly repudiates the belief that Jesus was the son of God (19:34-35, 88-92). Jesus is described as following the Jewish ethos and traditions (3:48, 50; 61:6). The Quran unequivocally maintains that Jesus was not crucified, but he was raised up to the heavens. “That they say (in boast), “We killed Jesus Christ, the son of Mary, the Apostle of God,” but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for certainly they killed him not. No, God raised him unto Himself, and God is Exalted in power, Wise” (4:157-158). Ibn Kathir mentions that someone else was crucified in Jesus’s place.

“Behold! The angels said: “O Mary, God gives you glad tidings of a Word from Him; his name will be Jesus, the Son of Mary, held in honour in this world and in the Hereafter and of (the company of) those nearest to God. He shall speak to the people in infancy and in maturity. And he shall be (of the company) of the righteous. She said: “O my Lord! How shall I have a son when no man has touched me? He said: “Even so, God creates what He wills.....And God will teach him the Book and wisdom, the Torah and the Gospel” (Quran 3: 45-48).

When Prophet Muhammad received his first revelation in the cave of Hira in Makka he returned home in a statement of bewilderment and told his wife Khadija about the incident. The next day she took him to her uncle Waraqa ibn Naufal who had embraced Christianity and was well-versed in Jewish and Christian scriptures. Waraqa had translated the Gospels from Syriac into Arabic. After the Prophet narrated his experience Waraqa told them that this was a sure sign of prophecy. Your experience, he said, is similar to the namus of Moses. If I were to be alive, he added, when your people would drive you out of your city, I would support you. A renowned Islamic scholar, Professor Muhammad Hamidullah, is of the opinion that the word namus is an Arabicized form of a Greek word nomos, which seems to have found its way into Syriac. The word nomos in Greek refers to the Torah. Therefore, what Waraqa meant was that the Prophet's experience of receiving the first revelation was similar to that of Moses on the Mount Sinai.

During his nocturnal ascension to heaven (mi'raj) Prophet Muhammad is reported to have met the earlier prophets, including Jesus Christ. He described Jesus as very fair and handsome, of medium stature, and with a broad chest and long, curly hair. According to the Islamic tradition, Jesus will come down to earth before the end of time. Faced with hostility and persecution, some Companions of the Prophet decided to migrate, on his advice, to Abyssinia, which was under the rule of a Christian called Negus. When they were ushered in the court of the Negus, the crucial question about Jesus came up. The Muslims declared that, according to the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet, Jesus was a servant of God and His apostle and His Word who was born from the blessed virgin. Thereupon the Negus picked up a stick from the ground and said: "By God, Jesus, son of Mary does not exceed what you have said by the length of this stick."

Faced with hostility and persecution, some Companions of the Prophet decided to migrate, on his advice, to Abyssinia, which was under the rule of a Christian called Negus. When they were ushered in the court of the Negus, the crucial question about Jesus came up. The Muslims declared that, according to the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet, Jesus was a servant of God and His apostle and His Word who was born from the blessed virgin. Thereupon the Negus picked up a stick from the ground and said: "By God, Jesus, son of Mary does not exceed what you have said by the length of this stick."

Jesus and Christianity in Islamic Literature

From early times Muslim scholars evinced a keen interest in knowing and writing about the religious beliefs, traditions and rituals of peoples from different regions and cultures.

There is a substantial literature in Arabic on the beliefs, rituals, feasts and customs of pre-Islamic Arabia as well as of Jews, Christians, Sabaeans, Magians, Hindus, Zoroastrians and others. The most important and wide-ranging contributions to this genre were made by Ibn Qutayba (d. 883), Ibn al-Habib (d. 859), Al-Masudi (d. 956), Al-Biruni (d. 1048), Ibn Hazm (d. 1064), Abdul Qahir al-Baghdadi (d. 1037), Al-Shahrastani (d. 1153), Qadi Sa'id (d. 1070), Shihabuddin al-Qarafī (d. 1285), Al-Maqrizi, Ibn Taymiah (d. 1325), Al-Ya'qubi (14th century), Haji Khalifa (d. 1658), and Rahmatullah Kairanvi (19th century).

Al-Masudi has dwelt on the history of Christianity and on Christian doctrines in his book *Muruj al-dhahab*. Interestingly, he also mentions that the apostle Thomas traveled to India where he lies buried. Baigent also refers to this legend (p.135). Al-Biruni, in his book *Al-Athar al-baqiya fil qurun al-khaliya*, discussed the inconsistencies in the Gospels. He also writes about the gospels which were declared as apocryphal by the Council of Nicaea. Al-Yaqubi has given a summary of the four canonical Gospels in his historical works. Ibn Hazm, in his book *Al-fisal fil milal wal-ahwa wal-nihal*, has offered a detailed and critical discussion on the beliefs and doctrines of Jews, Christians and the followers of other religions. He also dwells on some of the major sects within Christianity. Ibn Hazm had made a careful study of the Old and New Testaments. In fact, he may be regarded as a pioneer in the critical study of the Old and New Testament texts. To quote him:

The Torah is claimed by its adherents to be the verbatim word of God conveyed by Him to Moses and written by his own hand. That is why I had to write the foregoing long and assiduous analysis of its text to establish the contrary. Fortunately, no Christian makes this kind of claim regarding the New Testament. All Christians agree that the New Testament is a composite of works by the four apostles—Matthew, Mark, John and Luke—and a number of other writings by humans.

Faced with hostility and persecution, some Companions of the Prophet decided to migrate, on his advice, to Abyssinia, which was under the rule of a Christian called Negus. When they were ushered in the court of the Negus, the crucial question about Jesus came up. The Muslims declared that, according to the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet, Jesus was a servant of God and His apostle and His Word who was born from the blessed virgin. Thereupon the Negus picked up a stick from the ground and said: “By God, Jesus, son of Mary does not exceed what you have said by the length of this stick.”

Pope Benedict XVI and Islamophobia

IOS Research Network

Pope Benedict XVI, while delivering his address at Regensburg University in Germany on September 12, quoted a dialogue from a 14th century book, written by a Christian priest, between the Byzantine emperor Manuel II Paleologus and an educated Persian Muslim on the subject of Christianity and Islam. The dialogue took place, at the initiative of the emperor, against the backdrop of the siege of Constantinople by the Ottoman king Bayazid I between 1394 and 1402.



Pope Benedict XVI

The Pope pointed out that the emperor must have known that surah 2:256 of the Quran reads: “There is no compulsion in religion.” But naturally, the Pope added, the emperor also knew the instructions, developed later and recorded in the Quran, concerning holy war. The emperor then asked the educated Muslim: ‘Show me just what Mohammed brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached.’



Protests against the Pope's
remarks in Qom, Iran

The Pope added that the emperor then went on to “explain in detail the reasons why spreading the faith through violence is something unreasonable. Violence is incompatible with the nature of God and the nature of the soul. God is not pleased by blood—and not acting reasonably is contrary to God’s nature. Faith is born of the soul, not the body.’ The Pope then concluded: “The decisive statement in this argument against violent conversion is this: Not to act in accordance with reason is contrary to God’s nature.”

The Pope’s remarks created a huge furore across the Muslim world. Islamic organizations and Muslim states denounced his statements and accused him of slandering Islam and the Prophet and attempting to rekindle the fires of the crusades. Iran’s supreme religious leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei stated that “the most important aim of these remarks is the creation of a religious crisis in the world and to make different religions confront each other. The remarks are in line with the crusade against Muslims.” Morocco withdrew its ambassador to the Vatican, calling the Pope’s comments offensive. The New York Times said in an editorial on September 17 that Pope Benedict must issue a “deep and persuasive apology for the quotes in his speech. The world listens carefully to the words of any pope. And it is tragic and dangerous when one sows pain, either deliberately or carelessly.”

Some fair-minded Christian priests also felt that the Pope's remarks had the potential to hurt the sentiments of Muslims. Fr Julian Saldanha, a theology professor at the St. Pius Seminary in Goregaon (Mumbai) felt that the Pope should have shown greater sensitivity. He said that the Pope reproduced a quotation which is derogatory of the Prophet Mohammed, without refuting it or showing that he disagrees with it. I cannot agree with this comment, which is incorrect and lacking in sensitivity and respect, said Fr Saldanha. It would be good, he added, if the Pope told us what he appreciated about the Prophet. Rev Daniel A. Madigan, Rector of the Institute for the Study of Religions and Cultures at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, said that "you clearly take a risk using an example like that. Certainly the Pope closes the door to an idea which was very dear to Pope John Paul II—the idea that Christians, Jews and Muslims have the same God and have to pray together to the same God." A Catholic journalist Kornelius Puruba, writing in the Jakarta Post, said that "it will be more difficult now—after the Pope's recent remarks—to argue that there is no clash of civilizations between the West (Christianity) and Islam."

A half-hearted apology

Faced with world-wide protests from Muslims, Pope Benedict tendered a personal apology for his remarks on September 17. He said in his apology that he was misunderstood and added that he was "deeply sorry for the reaction in some countries to a few passages of my address at the University of Regensburg, which were considered offensive to the sensibility of Muslims. These in fact were a quotation from a medieval text, which do not in any way express my personal thought. I hope that this serves to appease hearts and to clarify that the true meaning of my address, which in its totality, was and is an invitation to frank and sincere dialogue, with great mutual respect." The next day he told pilgrims at the Vatican that his remarks on Islam had been misunderstood, adding "I trust that my words at the University of Regensburg can constitute an impulse and encouragement towards positive, even self-critical, dialogue both among religions and between modern reason and Christian faith."



Pope Benedict apologising for his remarks



Ayatollah Ali Khamenei

It appears from the text of his apology and the remarks he made at the Vatican that the Pope did not think he said anything wrong. He only expressed his regret for the "reactions" of Muslims. He said that the quotation from the medieval text does not reflect his own "personal thought." One wishes he was more explicit in his apology and about his "personal thought" (on Islam and the Prophet). The least he could have

done is to retract his statement. Hence his apology seems to be half-hearted.

A profile of Pope Benedict XVI

Long before he was elevated as pope, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (as he was known before assuming the title of Pope Benedict XVI) was known for his doctrinal conservatism and his intolerance of dissent. He believes the Church to be a divinely-ordained institution and is highly critical of those priests and theologians who think of it as a human construction. He believes that “the Church, the bearer of faith, does not sin.”

Unlike his predecessor John Paul II, who was very supportive of inter-faith dialogue, especially between Christians and Muslims, and who was the first pope to ever step in a mosque (in Syria in 2001), Pope Benedict XVI does not think much of inter-faith dialogue. He believes that divine revelation came to an end with Jesus Christ. In 1996 he had written that Islam had difficulty in adapting to modern life. Pope Benedict is firmly opposed to birth control and abortion, ardently supports the celibacy of priesthood, and is against the ordination of women. He is reported to have said that anyone who supports the “grave sin” of abortion should be denied communion. He once denounced rock music as the “vehicle of anti-religion.”



Pope John Paul II

In 1981 Cardinal Ratzinger was appointed the head of Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (which was earlier known as the Inquisition). He has a reputation for stifling dissent. One of his early campaigns was against liberation theology. (Liberation theology is a Roman Catholic movement that originated in Latin America in the last decades of the 20th century. It seeks to express religious faith by helping the poor and by working for social and political transformation. The Vatican has been wary of liberation theology and has sought to undermine its influence by appointing more conservative prelates.) Pope Benedict has described the supporters and sympathizers of liberation theology as being inspired by Marxism rather than Christianity.

In 2004 when he was the Vatican’s topmost theologian, Cardinal Ratzinger created a stir by opposing Turkey’s bid to join the European Union because “as a Muslim country, it was in permanent contrast to Europe.” He argued that Turkey belonged to a different cultural sphere, adding that its admission into the EU would be a grave error against the tide of history.

One of the first signs of Pope Benedict’s departure from the reconciliatory approach of Pope John Paul II and his toughening stance towards the Islamic world was the removal from office, at his instance, of Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald. The British-born cleric was

In 2004 when he was the Vatican’s topmost theologian, Cardinal Ratzinger created a stir by opposing Turkey’s bid to join the European Union because “as a Muslim country, it was in permanent contrast to Europe.” He argued that Turkey belonged to a different cultural sphere, adding that its admission into the EU would be a grave error against the tide of history.

heading a Vatican department that promoted dialogue with other religions. A distinguished scholar on Arab and Muslim affairs, he was an acknowledged expert on the Islamic world and on Christian-Muslim relations. The decision by Pope Benedict to remove Fitzgerald from his post and to send him to Egypt as papal nuncio was widely seen as a demotion.

Father Thomas Reese, a Jesuit scholar and an authority on the workings of the Vatican, told the BBC news website that “the Pope’s worst decision so far has been the exiling of Archbishop Fitzgerald. He was the smartest guy in the Vatican on relations with Muslims. You don’t exile someone like that, you listen to them. If the Vatican says something dumb about Muslims, people will die in parts of Africa and churches will be burned in Indonesia, let alone what happens in the Middle East.”

During his recent visit to Spain, Pope Benedict prayed at the ancient cathedral in Valencia, which was originally a mosque built during Muslim rule. (Contrast this with the action of the caliph Umar who refused to say his prayers in the premises of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre lest it might be claimed it as a mosque by later Muslims.)

Between the lines

Pope Benedict’s remarks on Islam in his address at Regensburg University, his subsequent apology and his statement at the Vatican on September 18 should be seen not in isolation but in the context of his overall views about Islam and Muslims and about inter-faith dialogue. The sub-text of his remarks and their subtle insinuations point to a set of unstated assumptions about Islam, which are set forth in the following.

- (1) Islam represents a sum of evil and inhuman dogmas and practices.
- (2) The expansion of Islam has been due to coercion and violent proselytization.
- (3) The doctrine of holy war (*jihad*) in Islam and violence are indissociable.
- (4) The use of coercion or violence for conversion is at variance with God’s will and is contrary to reason.
- (5) Since Islam has spread through coercion and violence, it is unreasonable and, at the same time, devoid of God’s approval.
- (6) There is no place for reason in the Islamic world-view, whereas it has a central role in Christianity.

These hidden, unstated assumptions underlying the Pope’s remarks become clearer in the light of the Swiss interior minister Pascal Couchepin’s defence of his speech, reported by the media on September 17. Couchepin described the Pope’s speech as “intelligent and necessary.” He added that Christianity is based on the Greek way of thinking in which faith does not contradict reason, while in Islam Allah can do literally everything even if it contradicts reason. This is what the Pope was pointing out and I think he was right, he added. EU Commission President Jose Manuel Durao Barroso also defended the Pope, saying more European leaders should have supported him. The problem is not the comments of the Pope but the reactions of the extremists, he added.

Islamophobia

Norman Daniel, in his illuminating book *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image* (1960), has shown that from the time of St. John of Damascus in the eighth century and Peter the Venerable in the twelfth century, the Western perception of Islam has been shaped, for the most part, by ignorance, prejudice and misrepresentation. St. John (d. 750) regarded Islam as a Christian heresy. Pope Innocent III described Prophet Muhammad as the Antichrist. The Royal Chaplain and Father Confessor of Spain, Jaime Bleda, introduced the Prophet as the deceiver of the world, false prophet, Satan's messenger, the Beast of the Apocalypse and the worst precursor of the Antichrist. The Prophet was debunked by Christian polemicists as an ambitious schemer, a bandit, an impostor and even an epileptic. His claim to prophecy was dismissed as fraudulent and his religion a sum of heresy. Mosques were described as synagogues of Satan. Martin Luther wrote several treatises attacking the Quran and Prophet Muhammad. He dubbed Islam as a false religion. (*Islam and the West: The Making of an Image*, pp. 246, 276; see also R. W. Southern: *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (1962), and Minou Reeves: *Muhammad in Europe: A Thousand Years of Western Myth Making* (2000).

Following the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), the Office for Non-Christian Affairs at the Vatican produced a document entitled "Orientations for a Dialogue between Christians and Muslims" in 1970, which urges Christians to 'clear away the outdated image, inherited from the past, or distorted by prejudice and slander, that Christians have of Islam. The document recognizes the past injustice towards the Muslims for which the West, with its Christian education, is to blame. The document notes with regret that far too many Christians, brought up in an atmosphere of open hostility, are against any reflection on Islam."

The Runnymede Trust in Britain set up a Commission on Islamophobia in 1997, which revealed that Islamophobia—fear of and hostility towards Islam and Muslims—was one of the chief forms of racism in the country.

The wide prevalence of Islamophobia in Western countries is reflected in the stigmatization and demonization of Islam and Muslims, in the opposition to the visibility of Islamic symbols in public places, in the distortion and misrepresentation of matters related to Muslims by the Western media, in racial profiling and surveillance, in the opposition to immigration by the far-right political parties, and in discrimination against Muslims in respect of employment, education and housing. It is widely believed in Europe that its over 20 million Muslims pose a serious threat to the security, culture and prosperity of European societies. Islamophobia has been on the rise after 9/11. (see <http://www.eumc.eu.int>)

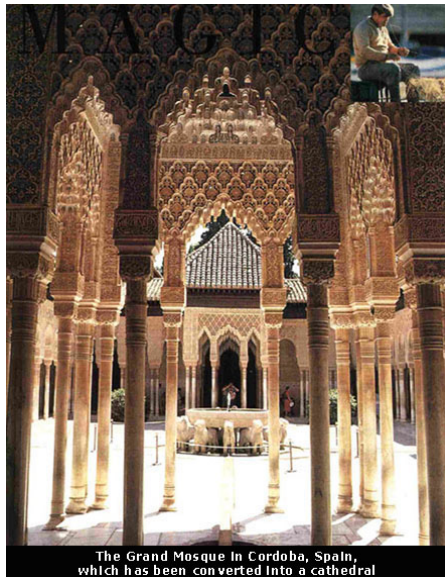
Following the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), the Office for Non-Christian Affairs at the Vatican produced a document entitled "Orientations for a Dialogue between Christians and Muslims" in 1970, which urges Christians to 'clear away the outdated image, inherited from the past, or distorted by prejudice and slander, that Christians have of Islam. The document recognizes the past injustice towards the Muslims for which the West, with its Christian education, is to blame. The document notes with regret that far too many Christians, brought up in an atmosphere of open hostility, are against any reflection on Islam."

Islamophobia has been strengthened by the writings of some intellectuals and writers in the West, such as Oriana Fallaci, Bernard Lewis, Samuel Huntington and Francis Fukuyama. Oriana Fallaci, Italian writer and journalist, described Europe as “Eurabia” and said that “the continent has sold itself and sells itself to the enemy (Muslims) like a prostitute. Europe has become more and more a province of Islam, a colony of Islam.”

Jihad

The thrust of the Byzantine emperor’s argument, quoted by the Pope, is that the notion of *jihad* involves the spread of Islam by the sword. Unfortunately, both the emperor and the Pope seem to be ill-informed about the meaning and import of *jihad*. It connotes a sincere striving in the service of a virtuous cause. It includes a struggle within oneself in order to gain control over one’s base sentiments and traits (such as jealousy, greed, malice, dishonesty), a fearless assertion of truth before a tyrannical ruler, the fight against injustice and oppression, and the sacrifice of one’s wealth and even life in defence of one’s country or one’s honour. Therefore, *jihad* cannot be exclusively identified with force or violence, though it may sometimes involve force.

It is significant to note that before his arrest by the Romans, Jesus told his disciples: “He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one” (Luke 22:36). The gospels say that when Jesus entered the temple in Jerusalem and began to drive out those who were buying and selling within its sacred precincts, he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold doves (Mark 11:15-16). The gospel of John adds that Jesus “knotted a whip out of small cords and drove them all out of the temple” (John 2:15).



The Grand Mosque in Cordoba, Spain, which has been converted into a cathedral

Islam and the sword

The belief, reflected in the quotation used by the Pope, that Islam has spread by the sword is a malicious canard which has been perpetuated in Europe for the past several centuries. There is an enormous amount of historical, empirical and sociological evidence to refute this belief. It is pertinent to quote Thomas Arnold, an English missionary in the Indian Civil Service of colonial days:

of any organized attempt to force the acceptance of Islam on the non-Muslim population, or of any systematic prosecution intended to stamp out the Christian religion, we hear nothing. Had the caliphs chosen to adopt either course of action, they might have swept away Christianity as easily as Ferdinand and Isabella drove Islam out of Spain, or Louis XIV made Protestantism penal in France, or the Jews were kept out of England for 350 years. The Eastern Churches in Asia were entirely cut off from communion with the rest of Christendom throughout which no one would have been found to lift a finger on their behalf, as heretical communions. So

that the very survival of these Churches to the present day is a strong proof of the generally tolerant attitude of the Muhammadan governments towards them (*The Preaching of Islam* (1896), p. 80).

Peaceful coexistence, tolerance and accommodation are the hallmarks of the Islamic tradition. The Quran explicitly states that there is no place for compulsion in Islam (2:256; 109:6). The attitude and behaviour of Prophet Muhammad towards the beliefs and traditions of the followers of other religions exhibited exemplary tolerance, understanding and magnanimity. He allowed a delegation of polytheists and idolators from Taif to stay in his mosque at Madina. Some Christians from Najran, who visited the Prophet, sought his permission to say their prayers in the mosque, which was granted.

When the Prophet set up a city-state at Madina, he drew up its constitution, which was committed to writing at his instance. This constitution included two significant passages: first, Muslims and Jews will be entitled to the preservation and protection of their respective religious traditions; second, Muslims and Jews will together constitute a (political) community. This covenant was extended, at a later date, to the Christians of Najran and the pagan Arabs. Thus the *Pax Islamica* included not only Muslims but also Jews, Christians and pagan Arabs, and guaranteed to them religious, cultural, and judicial autonomy. The city-state of Madina provided the first model of democratic pluralism.

A violent history

As a theologian Pope Benedict must certainly be aware of the following statement of Jesus Christ: “The straw that is in thy brother’s eye, thou seest; but the beam that is thine own eye, thou seest not! Hypocrite, cast first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to take out the straw from thy brother’s eye” (Luke 6: 41-42).

The record of the Catholic Church, which has been amply documented by Western scholars, is scarred by deception, corruption, brutal suppression of dissent, and violence. The first Muslim missionaries who were sent to Christendom were met with swords drawn and were massacred at Dhat al-Talh in 629.

The Crusades

The Crusades (1095-1292) cast a long and ominous shadow for several centuries over Christian-Muslim relations. In a recent article, Daniel Johnson writes that in the eyes even of most Christians, the Crusades were a crime against humanity, one for which apologies are due, especially to Muslims. (Daniel Johnson, “How to Think About the Crusades” *Commentary*, 120 (1), July-August 2005) The Crusades were a barbaric, unprovoked war of aggression, conquest and extermination. As several Western historians have pointed out, many of the crusaders were motivated by greed and avarice and by the pursuit of land and plunder. Anti-Islamic rhetoric incited the passions of the crusaders. Pope Urban II contemptuously described Muslims as “a race utterly alien to God.” When Jerusalem fell in 1099, the crusaders vandalized and devastated the city and massacred tens of thousands of Muslims and Jews. For Jews, who had been living in the city in peace and harmony with

Muslims, it was a catastrophe unprecedented since the destruction of the Temple. Soon the definition of crusade was widened to include the extermination of Jews, heretics and pagans in Europe and elsewhere. During the fourth Crusade, which was diverted from the reconquest of Jerusalem and instead turned to the sacking of Constantinople in 1204, Eastern Orthodox Christians also suffered at the hands of the crusaders.

A few years ago, the Nobel Prize-winning German novelist Guenter Grass suggested that Pope John Paul II, “who knows how lasting and devastating the disaster wrought by the mentality and actions of Christian crusaders have been”, should issue a formal apology to the Muslim world.

The crusades were directed not only against Muslims and Jews but also those persons and communities, such as the Knight Templar and the Cathari, which were declared heretics by the Church. The suspected heretics were arrested by the Inquisition, tried, tortured and ultimately burned at the stake. The use of torture against heretics was approved by Pope Innocent IV in 1252. The Knight Templar were a religious military order of knighthood established during the Crusades in the early 12th century for the purpose of protecting pilgrims from Muslim warriors. They took vows of poverty and chastity and performed courageous service. They flourished for two centuries and their number swelled to 20,000. By 1304 they were falsely accused of harbouring heretical beliefs and practices and were made the target of persecution. Under instructions from Pope Clement V, their properties were confiscated. Many were imprisoned and executed. Their leader Jacques de Molay was burned at the stake.

One of the victims of the Inquisition was the Christian sect of Cathari or Albigensians, who flourished in southern France in the 12th and 13th centuries. The Cathari believed that the material world was evil and therefore one must renounce the world to free his spirits. They saw Jesus Christ as a noble being, an angel, rather than as God incarnate. They were declared heretics by Pope Innocent III, who launched the Albigensian crusade against them. The entire populace in the Cathar regions in France was ruthlessly massacred and their towns were laid waste. An estimated 20,000 people, including women and children, were killed. Those held prisoner were tortured, blinded and mutilated. Likewise, Franciscans were suspected of being infested with heresy and many of them were burned at the stake.

In the Middle Ages, sorcery and witchcraft were believed to be associated with demonic possession and heresy and so came within the purview of the Inquisition. The Inquisition published a scandalous book *Malleus Maleficarum* (The Witches' Hammer), which instructed the Catholic clergy how to identify, torture and execute those women who were deemed “witches” by the Church. These “witches” included female scholars, priestesses, gypsies, and midwives who used medical knowledge to ease the pain of childbirth. In the course of three hundred years of witch-hunt by the Church, hundreds of thousands of women were burned at the stake.

After the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 A.D. Christian rulers had prohibited the Jews from entering or living in the city. Following the sack of Granada in

1492, a campaign of forcible conversion of Muslims and Jews at the instance of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, with the approval of the Church, was carried out. Those who refused were exiled or executed. About five hundred thousand Muslims and nearly two hundred thousand Jews were expelled from the country. In 1290, during the reign of King Edward I, all Jews were exiled from Britain. It was only after 366 years that they were allowed to return and settle in Britain during the time of Oliver Cromwell. Jews were denied citizenship and religious and cultural freedom in much of Europe during the Middle Ages. In some regions they were forcibly expelled. Anti-Semitism has continued to persist in Europe to this day.

Pope Benedict has stated that “violence is incompatible with the nature of God and the nature of the soul.” He must surely be sure that in many cases violence was perpetrated by those, including priests and popes, who swore by this lofty principle. His namesake Pope Benedict (972-974) was strangled by a priest after the Roman citizens rebelled against him. Pope Damasus I (366-384) hired a group of killers to spend three days massacring his opponents.

The Spanish Inquisition marks one of the bloodiest chapters in human history. It enjoyed the full support of Vatican’s High Office of the Inquisition, now called the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, an office Pope Benedict XVI once headed. The conquest of the Americas by the Spanish in the 16th century led to an extensive plundering of the local resources and the decimation of the indigenous population. The genocide was blessed by the Holy See.

The First and Second World Wars, which were mainly fought among Christian states, took a huge toll of human lives. In World War I, ten million people were killed and around 21 million were wounded. In World War II, 27 million people lost their lives and hundreds of thousands of soldiers were wounded and maimed. In addition, between 20 and 30 million civilians were killed as a result of aerial bombardment, mass atrocities, deportations and genocide. One of the most brutal and blood-chilling genocides in human history took place in Nazi Germany where nearly six million Jews, Gypsies and Slavs were systematically massacred by shooting, medical experimentation, or by the use of gas chambers. Pope Pius XII maintained an enigmatic silence in the face of the Holocaust.

Following the sack of Granada in 1492, a campaign of forcible conversion of Muslims and Jews at the instance of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, with the approval of the Church, was carried out. Those who refused were exiled or executed. About five hundred thousand Muslims and nearly two hundred thousand Jews were expelled from the country. In 1290, during the reign of King Edward I, all Jews were exiled from Britain. It was only after 366 years that they were allowed to return and settle in Britain during the time of Oliver Cromwell. Jews were denied citizenship and religious and cultural freedom in much of Europe during the Middle Ages.

In the Bosnian civil war (1992-95) the Serbs carried out a brutal pogrom of ethnic cleansing and genocide against Muslims and Croats. Virtually the entire population of Bosnia-Herzegovina was uprooted. Thousands of people were mercilessly massacred and hundreds of women were raped.

The Christian churches in Bosnia were severely compromised. Radavan Karadjic, the Serb general who masterminded the pogrom, was never reprimanded by the Orthodox Church. The Vatican extended its support only to Catholic Croatia. The IRA cadres in Ireland and Basque separatists in Spain and France (who are Catholics) have carried out violent, terrorist activities against their own coreligionists and their respective states for decades.

Reason and revelation

The conclusion drawn by Pope Benedict XVI from the dialogue between the Byzantine emperor and the Persian Muslim is that “not to act in accordance with reason is contrary to God’s nature.”

The Pope may or may not be aware—and even if he is, he is unlikely to acknowledge—the debt that Christian theology and Western civilization owes to Islam. The subject of the relation between reason and revelation—on which he waxes eloquent—engaged the minds of some of the greatest Muslim philosophers and theologians more than a thousand years ago. Al-Ghazali (d. 1109, known in Europe as Algazel), Ibn Rushd (d. 1198, known as Averroes), Ibn Sina (d. 1037, known as Avicenna) and Al-Farabi (d. 950, known as Alfarabius or Avennasar) wrote extensively on the place of reason in religion.

What is particularly important, as the distinguished historian Robert Hammond has convincingly demonstrated, is that several Christian theologians in the Middle Ages, notably St. Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274), Raymond Lull (d. 1314), Albertus Magnus and Raymund Martin, were greatly influenced by the ideas of Muslim philosophers and theologians. The views of Ibn Sina had a deep influence on the scholastic philosophy of Albertus Magnus.

Al-Ghazali wrote a treatise in the late 11th century on the relation between reason and revelation. Thomas Aquinas, the foremost philosopher and theologian of the Catholic Church and the champion of orthodoxy, was profoundly influenced by the ideas of Al-Ghazali, Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd. Aquinas’ view that reason is capable of operating within faith, enunciated in his *Summa Theologica*, bears the unmistakable imprint of the thoughts of Muslim philosophers. In his *Quaestiones Disputatae*, Thomas Aquinas refers to Averroes’ observations on the nature of God’s knowledge. He borrowed a great deal from Al-Farabi, especially in regard to the attributes of God and the proofs of His existence. The arguments set forth by Aquinas for the existence of God are virtually the same as those enunciated by Al-Farabi.

One wishes the Pope, who claims to be such a great votary of reason, could engage in some self-introspection concerning the compatibility between reason and Christian dogmas, including trinity, the divinity of Jesus Christ, original sin and atonement. Since the Enlightenment there has been a growing realization of the fact that these Christian doctrines are at variance with reason. The process of secularization, which is continuing apace in Europe, owes much, in addition to the scientific spirit and modernization, to the perceived unreasonableness of many of the dogmas of Pauline Christianity.

Before the 13th century, the Catholic Church held that all unbaptised people, including newborn babies who died, would go to hell. This was because original sin—the punishment that God inflicted on humanity because of Adam and Eve’s alleged disobedience—had not been cleansed by baptism. Subsequently this dogma was replaced by the notion of limbo, which held that unbaptised babies would not experience pain but neither would they experience the Beatific Vision of God. (Incidentally, how does one reconcile this dogma with belief in a loving God?) Muslims, on the other hand, believe that the souls of stillborn babies go straight to heaven.

An anthropologist Leopold Pospisil, in his book *The Kapauku Papuans of West New Guinea* (1963) quotes a Papuan native in a ‘Stone Age’ society that was still mainly unaffected by Western culture at the time of his fieldwork in 1955. The native asked, ‘Why, if (as you say) God is omnipotent, did the Creator have to change himself into a man and allow himself to be killed (crucified) when it would have been enough for him to order men to behave?’ The native added that the Christian notion of man resembling God in appearance seemed to him utterly “stupid” (p. 85). T. J. Winter, an Oxford don who embraced Islam many years ago, recently said in a statement that he regards the doctrine of the Holy Trinity as nonsensical.

Thomas Aquinas, the foremost philosopher and theologian of the Catholic Church and the champion of orthodoxy, was profoundly influenced by the ideas of Al-Ghazali, Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd. Aquinas’ view that reason is capable of operating within faith, enunciated in his *Summa Theologica*, bears the unmistakable imprint of the thoughts of Muslim philosophers. In his *Quaestiones Disputatae*, Thomas Aquinas refers to Averroes’ observations on the nature of God’s knowledge. He borrowed a great deal from Al-Farabi, especially in regard to the attributes of God and the proofs of His existence. The arguments set forth by Aquinas for the existence of God are virtually the same as those enunciated by Al-Farabi.

The endemic conflict between the Catholic Church and science is too well known to be reiterated. The cosmological theories of Bruno (d. 1600), which laid the foundation of modern cosmology, were declared as heretical by the Catholic Church and led to his excommunication. After a seven-year trial by the Roman Inquisition he was burnt at the stake.

Many of the tenets of the Catholic Church, such as celibacy of priesthood, prohibition of the ordination of women in the church, and the taboo on birth control methods—even in the face of the grave menace of HIV/AIDS in Africa—are being increasingly perceived as irrational and out of sync with modern times by lay Christians as well as a growing number of Catholic priests.

The point is that the Catholic Church needs to set its own house in order before pointing fingers at others.

The Catholic Church and the crisis of credibility

Pope Benedict XVI, and the Catholic Church in general, seem to be greatly perturbed by certain developments in Europe. These include the steady decline of Christianity on the continent, the dwindling fortunes of the Catholic Church, the implication of Catholic priests in sex crimes, and the growing visibility of Muslims, including the large-scale conversion of white Christians to Islam.

Church attendance is steadily declining in most European countries. In Germany (the Pope's native country), between 1965 and 1999 the percentage of church-goers dropped from 75% to less than 30%. It has now fallen to less than 15%. In 1851, about 60% of the population of England and Wales attended church. By the end of the 20th century this figure dropped to 10%. In Sweden church attendance is now about 5%. The available survey data indicate that in most European countries there has been a general erosion of religious beliefs and a steady decline in church membership and attendance. The number of people willing to join the priesthood is steadily falling. In Britain, between 1900 and 1984 the number of priests declined from 20,000 to 10,000. The Catholic Church is faced with a worrying shortage of priests, especially in Europe.

Another source of worry and disquiet for the Catholic Church is the growing popularity of new religious movements and sects such as Pentecostalism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Scientology, Assemblies of God, and the charismatic movement. Pentecostalism, a Protestant movement which originated at a Bible College in Kansas, USA in 1901, is the world's fastest growing sect within Christianity with some 500 million followers. The

World Christian Encyclopaedia suggests that by 2050 there may be more than a billion people (nearly as much as the present Catholic population around the world) affiliated with Pentecostalism.

In the past few years there has been a spate of highly popular books, written by Western scholars and writers, which cast grave doubts on some of the fundamental tenets of Christianity. These books include *The Passover Plot* (first published in 1965) by Hugh Schonfield (which has sold over six million copies in 18 languages), *The Gnostic Gospels* (1980) by Elaine Pagels, *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* (1982) by Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln, *Lost Christianities* (2003) by Bart D. Ehrman, *The Da Vinci Code* (first published in 2003) by Dan Brown (which has become a publishing phenomenon and the subject of a popular—and controversial—film), and *The Jesus Papers: Exposing the Greatest Cover-Up in History* (2006) by Michael Baigent, which is a New York Times bestseller.

BBC's Panorama aired a documentary "Sex Crimes and the Vatican" on October 1, 2006. It focused on the wide prevalence in Europe, US and Canada of the sexual abuse of children by Catholic priests and revealed the existence of a secret document *Crimen Sollicitationis* written in Latin in 1962 and circulated among Catholic bishops across the world. The document, which contains instructions for bishops about dealing with allegations of child sex abuse against priests, was enforced for 20 years by Cardinal Ratzinger. The documentary revealed that Father Tom Doyle, a canon lawyer, had a diplomatic career with the Vatican but was sacked after he criticized the Church's handling of child abuse. He pointed out that "*Crimen Sollicitationis* is indicative of a worldwide policy of absolute secrecy and control of all cases of sexual abuse by the clergy. Nowhere in any of these documents does it say anything about helping the victims. The only thing it does is that they can impose fear on the victims and punish the victims for discussing or disclosing what happened to them." The document imposes the strictest oath of secrecy on the child victim, the priest dealing with the allegation and any witnesses. Breaking that oath means instant banishment from the Catholic Church—excommunication. Father Doyle pointed out that when the perpetrators—the priests—are discovered, the systematic response on the part of the Catholic Church has been not to investigate and prosecute the culprits but to shift them from one place to another in a secret manner. So, he says, there is a total disregard for the victims.

The BBC documentary names some priests, such as Father Sean Fortune and Father Oliver O'Grady, who have been known child abusers and paedophiles. Despite knowing the heinous background of such priests, the Catholic Church simply shifted them secretly from parish to parish and never bothered to inform the police. Furthermore, they were helped and shielded by their own bishops. Father Fortune was finally exposed by some of

the victims and their families, following which he killed himself on the eve of his criminal trial. Father O'Grady abused at least 30 victims over a period of two decades. He was finally caught, confessed to his crime and was jailed for seven years.

The documentary reveals that in the US 4500 priests have been accused of raping or sexually abusing children. In 1996 a budget of US\$ 7 million for covering up cases of child sex abuse by priests was allocated by the Church. The documentary refers to the Ferns Report, which revealed that over 100 boys and girls were sexually abused and raped by 26 priests in one diocese alone. Some American priests, who were accused of child abuse and were wanted by the police, fled to Rome where they were protected and sheltered by the Vatican. Cardinal Ratzinger sent instructions to all Catholic bishops that all allegations of child abuse should be sent to the Vatican, which suggests that he was personally involved in the massive cover-up. Disgusted by the attitude of the Church some priests, such as Father Patrick, left the priesthood and joined lawyers acting for the victims of child sex abuse.

The Muslim population in Europe, including immigrants, their second and third generation descendants, and converts, has experienced a remarkable growth in recent years. The number of Muslims in Europe is estimated at 25-30 million, with more than 5 million in France, 3 million in Germany and 1.6 million in Britain. The number of white Christian converts to Islam is steadily rising, especially in France, Germany, Britain and the Netherlands. In the Netherlands there has been a ten-fold increase in the number of white converts after 9/11. In Paris alone there are more than a hundred thousand white converts, mostly women. In Britain the number of white converts exceeds 40,000.

These converts include T. J. Winter, an Oxford scholar, Martin Lings, a former Keeper of Oriental Manuscripts at the British Museum, Yahya Birt, the son of BBC's former chief, Matthew Wilkinson, former head boy of Eaton, Joe Ahmad Dobson, the son of a former cabinet minister in Britain, members of the New Left, and some members of the House of Lords.

The Muslim population in Europe, including immigrants, their second and third generation descendants, and converts, has experienced a remarkable growth in recent years. The number of Muslims in Europe is estimated at 25-30 million, with more than 5 million in France, 3 million in Germany and 1.6 million in Britain. The number of white Christian converts to Islam is steadily rising, especially in France, Germany, Britain and the Netherlands. In the Netherlands there has been a ten-fold increase in the number of white converts after 9/11

Yahya Birt says that “Islam is pure monotheism. It has a clear moral system and an intact tradition of religious scholarship. No scripture expresses its message of the oneness of God as clearly as the Quran. It also has a rich mysticism, which maybe what appeals to middle class white Brits like me.” One may ask the Pope whether he thinks the conversion of tens of thousands of white Christian converts to Islam in Europe is due to forcible or violent proselytization.

Christian-Muslim dialogue in a globalising world

Christians and Muslims constitute nearly half of the world’s population. The followers of the Judaeo-Christian-Islamic tradition need to join hands in order to face the challenges of our globalizing era. This can be done by engaging in a sincere dialogue in an atmosphere of mutual respect, sensitivity and accommodation. However, this dialogue is not likely to bear fruit unless the subliminal baggage of prejudices and malice is abandoned, unless the attitude of self-righteousness and exclusion is given up.

Since the time of Cyprian (d. 258), who propounded the principle that outside the Church of Rome there is no salvation, the Catholic Church continues to believe that “whosoever.....knowing that the Catholic Church was made necessary by God through Jesus Christ, would refuse to enter her, or to remain in her, could not be saved.” In other words, not only Jews and Muslims (as well as the followers of other religions) but also Protestants and Orthodox Christians are unworthy of salvation. After 2000 years the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) decreed that Judaism is religiously acceptable as a *preparatio* for Christianity. Unfortunately, neither the Catholic Church nor the Protestant and Orthodox churches have ever recognized Islam as embodying a genuine religious experience.

The Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences has issued a refreshing statement in recent times.

The Church has to be in constant dialogue with the religions of Asia and to embark on this with great seriousness.....There may be more truth about God and life than it is made known to us through the Jesus of history and the Church. As such, Christians who take Christ’s injunctions seriously must search for this truth in the various religions of the world.

Islam espouses a pure, unadulterated monotheism, which is the corner-stone of the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Furthermore, Islam is the only religion in the world (besides, of course, Christianity) which unequivocally affirms the prophecy and ministry of Jesus

Christ and hold him and his mother Mary in great esteem. The Quran offers an open invitation to Jews and Christians in the following words:

Say: "O People of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship none but God; that we associate no partners with Him; that we do not erect, from among ourselves, lords and patrons other than God." (3:64)

Say: "O People of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship none but God; that we associate no partners with Him; that we do not erect, from among ourselves, lords and patrons other than God." (3:64)

SACRILEGIOUS CARTOONS

*Is it justifiable to offend people's sensitivities in
the name of freedom of expression?
IOS Research Network*

In recent years, the perception about Islam and Muslims in large parts of the world, especially in Western countries, has been coloured by a great deal of prejudice, mistrust and distortion. The Runnymede Trust in Britain set up a Commission on Islamophobia in 1997, which revealed that Islamophobia—fear of and hatred towards Islam and Muslims—is one of the chief forms of racism in many European countries. The wide prevalence of Islamophobia in European societies is reflected in the demonization of Muslims, in discrimination in respect of employment, education and housing, and in attacks on the visibility of Islamic symbols in public places. It is widely believed in Europe that its over 15 million Muslims pose a serious threat to the security, culture and prosperity of European societies. Islamophobia has been on the rise after 9/11, as the report of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia testifies.

By and large, Muslim immigrants in European countries, including their descendants born and brought up in European societies, are faced with a multitude of problems, including institutionalized racism, lack of legal security, unclear citizenship status and high unemployment rate. In Britain, until December 2003, discrimination against Muslims was not considered unlawful because the courts refused to accept that Muslims are an ethnic group although, strangely, Jews and Sikhs are recognized as ethnic groups. Faced with an inhospitable atmosphere, many Muslim youths in France and other European countries are forced to change their names and to hide their local addresses for fear that this might jeopardize their chances of getting a job.



Followers of a hardline Shiite sect and thousands of other Nigerian Muslims drag the Norwegian, French and Danish flags through the streets of Kano

In some European countries, Muslims face the prospect of de-ethnicization and assimilation: the pressure to give up their ethnic and religious identity and to assimilate in the culture of the dominant population. The Bernard Stasi report, commissioned by the French president Jacques Chirac in 1997, recommended a ban on school children wearing outward religious symbols, including the Jewish yarmulke, the Christian crucifix, the Islamic headscarf, and the Sikh turban. The Netherlands, where the issue of *hijab* or the Islamic headscarf has become highly controversial, is considering a similar ban. In Germany, the southern state of Baden-

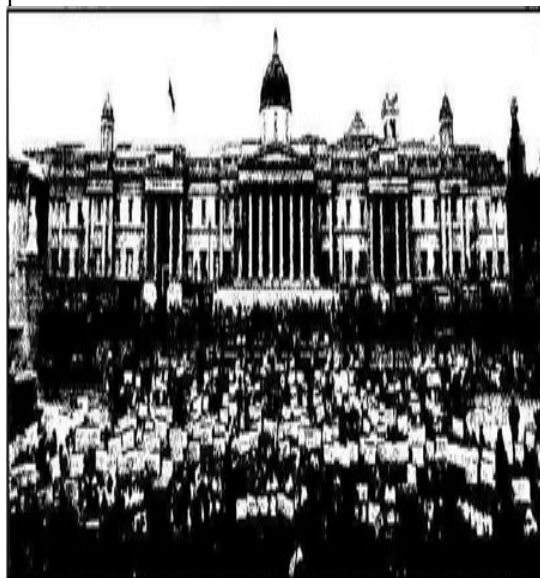
Wurttemberg has designed its own searching exam exclusively for Muslim applicants seeking German citizenship. Questions in the test include: If your son told you he was a homosexual and wanted to live with another man, how would you react? If your adult daughter dressed like a German woman, would you try to prevent her from doing so? In Belgium, the far-right Vlaams Belang Party, which won nearly a quarter of the national vote in the 2004 election, wants to prevent Muslim immigrants from bringing their brides from their home countries. In Britain the Labour government and many of its liberal supporters endorse this idea. An indication of the deep-seated nature of Islamophobia is provided by the controversy over Turkey's membership of the European Union. Austria has openly opposed the move. Germany, Greece, Denmark, the Netherlands, France, Sweden and Spain are not at all enthusiastic about Turkey's entry. French intellectuals are saying that it may be possible to welcome the Turkish elite—Westernised as they are—but not the “Anatolian peasant who is not European by culture, tradition or habit.” France and Austria have pledged to hold referendums on the question of Turkey's accession. Polls suggest that the move would be rejected by wide margins. An EU commissioner, the Dutch politician Fritz Bolkestein, warned that Turkish entry into the EU would “finish the job of the Ottoman Empire, and the liberation of Vienna would have been in vain.”

In September 2005 a minor Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten published 12 highly derogatory caricatures of Prophet Muhammad. In one of them he is shown wearing a bomb-shaped turban (thus portraying him as a terrorist). In early February 2006, several newspapers in 22 European countries, including the French daily *France-Soir* as well as *Le Monde* and *Liberation*, Germany's *Die Welt*, Italy's *Corriere della Serra* and *La Stampa* and Spain's Catalan daily *El Periodico*, republished some or all of the cartoons. In France, the front page of *France-Soir* carried the headline, “Yes, We Have the Right to Caricature God”, accompanied by a cartoon of Buddhist, Jewish, Muslim and Christian deities floating on a cloud. The editorial in *France-Soir* said that it had published the cartoons in the name of freedom of expression and to fight religious intolerance.

In Italy, Roberto Calderoli, deputy leader of the Northern League Party and a minister in the former centre-right government, sported a T-shirt depicting some of the controversial cartoons. He not only wore the T-shirt but also proudly displayed it on Italian television, which is widely viewed in Libya (a former Italian colony). Two days later, a large mob of Libyan Muslims stormed the Italian consulate at Benghazi, which led to the death of 14 persons and injury to 35 people. Calderoli was forced to resign from the cabinet, following which he was placed under interrogation on charges of offending religious beliefs.

Significantly, British and American newspapers did not reproduce the cartoons. Jack Straw, Britain's foreign secretary, called the publication of the cartoons "unnecessary, insensitive, disrespectful and wrong." The French president Jacques Chirac condemned the cartoons as a "manifest provocation". He said that freedom of expression was "one of the foundations of the Republic" but added a plea for "respect ad moderation" in its application. While maintaining that freedom of expression is dear to France, a foreign ministry statement said that France "condemns all that hurts individuals in their beliefs or convictions." The owner of *France-Soir* dismissed the managing editor of the paper after it republished the cartoons. The owner, Raymond Lahah, said in a statement that "he decided to remove Jacques Lefranc as managing editor of the paper as a powerful sign of respect for the intimate beliefs and convictions of every individual." America's State Department said that it was unacceptable to incite religious hatred by publishing such pictures. On February 8, three editors and a reporter resigned from the New York Press over the management's decision not to reprint the cartoons.

The publication of these sacrilegious cartoons generated an enormous amount of anger and resentment among Muslims across the world and led to unfortunate political, economic and diplomatic repercussions. Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Libya recalled their envoys to Denmark. The storming of the Italian embassy in Benghazi led to the resignation of Libya's interior minister. The Swedish foreign minister Laila Frevalds was forced to resign in March 2006 following a row over the closure of a website which published the cartoons. It was revealed that she had not given full information about her role in the closure of the website which belonged to a far-right political party in Sweden. Iran, which imports \$280 million worth of goods a year from Denmark, snapped all trade ties with the country. Muslim consumers across large parts of the world, especially in the Middle East, boycotted Danish products on a massive scale. The Danish manufacturer Arla Foods, which normally sells \$1.5



Demonstrators converge on Trafalgar Square in London to protest the publication of cartoons

million worth of dairy products from Denmark a day in the Middle East, announced that its sales had stopped. Trade between Denmark and the Persian Gulf, which amounts to one billion US dollars per year, came to a halt.

The publication of the cartoons led to massive and violent protests in several Muslim countries, including Libya, Nigeria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Beirut, Syria, Malaysia and Indonesia, resulting in the death of scores of people and injury to hundreds of protesters.

Danish embassies in Iran, Beirut, Syria and Libya were attacked and vandalized.

The Western media have sought to justify the publication of the cartoons in the name of freedom of expression. Thus, *The Economist* stated that “freedom of expression, including the freedom to poke fun at religion, is not just a hard-won human right but the defining freedom of liberal societies.” This is a specious, hypocritical and myopic argument which can be faulted on at least three counts. First, to regard freedom of expression as an absolute right, regardless of its implications and consequences for the wider society, is absurd. No country allows complete freedom of expression. It is restricted by prohibitions against defamation, libel, blasphemy, obscenity, national security, incitement to hatred and judicial and parliamentary privilege. The European Convention on Human Rights, while recognizing that every one has the right to freedom of expression, allows European nations to impose restrictions “in interests of national security, territorial integrity or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, for the protection of the reputation or rights of others.” Most if not all European countries have placed restrictions on freedom of expression through legislation. Thus, in Denmark and Britain (which have established churches) there is an anti-blasphemy law in respect of Christianity (which, ironically, does not apply to other religions). In Denmark, both the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party have opposed a parliamentary move to abolish the anti-blasphemy law. Nick Griffin, a leader of the far-right British National Party, had said in a recent speech that Islam was a vicious, wicked faith. He was tried for incitement to racial hatred, but on February 3, 2006 walked free at the end of the trial. In his defence, Griffin argued that he was attacking a religion (which, in the case of religions other than Christianity, is not an offence under British law), not a race.

The British Parliament passed a bill on 31 January 2006 aimed at providing protection against incitement to religious hatred. The bill could be passed only after members of both houses of Parliament succeeded in moving an amendment to the effect that incitement to religious hatred must involve the intention to arouse hatred. This is a specious qualification. It is well nigh impossible to uncover or judge the hidden motivation of such actions. One should rather focus on the consequences and repercussions of such actions in the context of the wider society. A few days after the furore, an Arabic newspaper published an apology from Jyllands-Posten’s editor-in-chief Carsten Juste, saying that “we now offer our apology and deepest regret for what happened because it was far from the paper’s intention. We did not intend to hurt or target anyone.” On the other hand, the cartoonist who drew the caricatures said in an interview to Glasgow Herald newspaper that he had no regret for his action and that freedom of expression and of the press was vital to a democratic society.

Curiously, Jyllands-Posten had refused to print cartoons of Jesus because it involved the risk of giving offence to some Christians. (See Gwyls Fouche, "Danish paper rejected Jesus cartoons" *Guardian*, 6 February 2006. So, what does one make of this rigmarole?

Eleven European countries, including Germany, France, Austria, Switzerland, Belgium and Poland, have laws (known as *Auschwitzluge* in the Germanic countries) which make the public denial or repudiation of the Holocaust a punishable offence. The world's best-known Holocaust denier Ernst Zundel, who was deported from Canada in 2005, faces 14 charges in Germany. British historian David Irving, author of 30 books on World War II, was jailed for three years by an Austrian court in 2006 for denying the Holocaust and the existence of gas chambers in Auschwitz in a speech he had given in Austria in 1989. Irving has been debarred from setting foot in Germany, Austria, Italy and Canada because of his views.

Second, the right to freedom of expression needs to be tempered with social responsibility and sensitivity towards the beliefs and sentiments of others. An unbridled right to freedom of expression, especially in a multiethnic society, is fraught with socially disruptive consequences. Third, the controversy is likely to increase the alienation and disaffection of Muslims in Europe, exacerbate the tension between Muslims and the Western world, and lead to a further radicalization of Muslim youth.

It needs to be pointed out that Muslims, whose sentiments have been hurt by the publication of these cartoons, have a right to protest against this sacrilege in a peaceful and democratic manner. Vandalism and violence in the name of protest is absolutely unjustifiable and is in fact counter-productive. It is gratifying to note that a *fatwa* issued by Egypt's grand Mufti Ali Juma'a stated that Muslims should protest peacefully, with "wisdom and exhortation." A joint statement issued by the United Nations, the Organization of Islamic Conference and the European Union condemned violent protests over the publication of the cartoons while calling for respect for religious beliefs. An ideal form of peaceful protest was displayed by Britain's Muslims who took out a peaceful rally of over 10,000 protesters on February 11. The rally was organized by the Muslim Council of Britain and the Muslim Association of Britain and backed by several Christian organizations as well as by Ken Livingstone, the Mayor of London.

Hardly had the furore over the cartoons abated when an Italian magazine *Studi Cattolici* published a cartoon of the Prophet on 16th April 2006, in which he is shown as cut in half and burning in hell. The chief editor of the magazine said that the cartoon was inspired by the 13th century Italian poet Dante's celebrated work *The Divine Comedy*.

The whole controversy, though unfortunate, has necessitated a serious rethinking of certain key issues, including limits to freedom of expression in multiethnic societies, the social responsibility of the media in the context of a globalizing world, and the role of the state and civil society.

Islam and Pluralism

Professor A.R. Momin

The terms plural society and pluralism, which came into vogue in the 1960s, have been increasingly used in anthropology, sociology, political science and international relations. The term plural society has been used to describe societies that are characterised by substantial racial, ethnic and social diversities and cleavages. Anthropologists have described many such societies as composite, multiple and dual societies. In the social sciences the term pluralism has been used in two rather different senses. In one sense, pluralism is said to be a property or character of societies that are marked by the coexistence of several distinct groups and cultural communities within a single political and economic system. By virtue of the fact that these groups and communities are governed by the same economic and political processes, they tend to be inter-dependent. At the same time, however, they have a good measure of autonomy. In the second sense, pluralism has a distinct political connotation and is regarded as a necessary condition for the viability of democracy in complex societies. In democratic pluralism, the decision making processes devolve upon a wide variety of autonomous political institutions and social groups.

The first usage of the term pluralism has gained wider currency in the social sciences. Another term, which has more or less the same connotation and which has surpassed pluralism in usage, is multiculturalism. Most contemporary societies, whether in Asia and Africa or in Europe and North America, are now plural and multicultural in the sense that they are composed of many distinct, self-conscious ethnic groups and cultural communities. The great migrations of the post-War period have not only altered the demographic composition of many countries in Europe and North America but have also challenged the assumption of a homogeneous national culture as the edifice of the nation-state. The process of globalisation, which has brought about an enormous amount of economic, financial, political and cultural uniformity and homogenisation across large parts of the world, has also contributed to the revival or reinvention of ethnic identities, thanks to the unprecedented advances in information and communication technologies.

Pluralism is not only indicative of an important facet of the political and social reality of our times but it also entails a set of moral premises and value-orientations, including an open and ungrudging acknowledgement and acceptance of ethnic and cultural diversity, disavowal of forced assimilation, tolerance and peaceful coexistence in a humane and democratic framework, respect for human rights, including community and minority rights, and commitment to dialogue and other peaceful methods of conflict resolution.

This article seeks to demonstrate that the contemporary discourse of pluralism and multiculturalism can profitably draw upon some of the valuable insights and contributions of Islamic civilization.

The Islamic perspective on diversity

The Islamic faith is founded on the edifice of two cardinal principles: the oneness and omnipotence of God, and the unity, equality and brotherhood of humankind. Islam takes cognisance of racial and ethnic diversities that characterises human societies across the world and holds that these diversities are divinely ordained. Thus the Qur'an says: "If thy Lord had so willed, He could have made humankind one people, but they will not cease to differ" (11:118). The Qur'an further says: "And among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the variations in your languages and colours; verily in that are signs for those who know" (30:22). Lineages, tribes and ethnic groups, which characterise human societies everywhere, are said to have been created by God (Qur'an, 25:54). However, these divisions are meant to serve the purpose of ethnic or cultural identification; they are not indices of social ranking, hierarchy or prestige. The only worthwhile distinction or honour in the Islamic view is piety and virtue. Thus the Qur'an says: "O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, so that you may know each other. Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of God is one who is the most righteous of you" (49:13).

The varied manifestations of diversity include variations in livelihood, behaviour patterns, knowledge and skills and the distribution of resources, including power. Islam takes due cognisance of such variations in respect of livelihood (2:212; 13:26; 16:71), knowledge (2:247; 58:11), and the distribution of wealth and power. The Qur'an says: "Such days (of varying fortunes) We give to people by turns" (3:140).

The universality of prophecy

In the Islamic view, God is not a parochial or racial deity like Jehovah, but the Lord of the universe and of all humankind. "All of mankind is God's family", says a tradition of the Prophet. The Qur'an says that prophets have been sent to all people in all parts of the world (35:24). Muslims are required to believe, not only in the prophecy of Muhammad, but in that of all other prophets (1,24,000, according to a tradition of the Prophet) who were sent to humankind at different points of time, as well as in all divine scriptures (2:4, 285; 3:84; 4:26, 162). Islam holds that all the prophets carried basically the same divine message. The Islamic view of prophecy, therefore, is inclusive rather than exclusive, universal rather than parochial.

According to the Islamic view, God's omnipotence and majesty transcend the diversity of modes and sites of worship. Thus the Qur'an says: "Had God not checked one set of people by means of another, there would surely have been pulled down monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques in which the name of God is commemorated in abundant measure" (22:40).

Tolerance and peaceful coexistence

The Qur'an explicitly maintains that there is no place in Islam for compulsion (2:256). It says: "If it had been thy Lord's wish, everyone in the world would have believed; will you

then compel people, against their will, to believe” (10:99). The Prophet is told to say to the unbelievers: “For you, your religion, and for me, mine” (109:6).

The Prophet is advised to invite people to the path of righteousness and guidance, not through intimidation and coercion, but in a gentle and amiable manner. Thus the Qur’an says: “Invite (all) to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching, and argue with them in the best of ways” (16:125). It is significant to note that when God asked Prophet Moses to go to the Pharaoh in order to invite him to the path of righteousness, he was told to “speak to him mildly, perchance he may heed the warning or fear God” (Qur’an 20:44). The Qur’an advises Muslims not to revile those who worship idols or images (6:108).

The people of Semitic religions, especially Jews and Christians, share some fundamental articles of faith with the Muslims. The Qur’an emphasises that these commonly shared tenets should provide the basis for dialogue and reconciliation between Muslims and the People of the Book. The Qur’an says: “O People of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship none but God, that we associate no partners with Him; that we appoint not, from among ourselves, lords and patrons other than God” (3:64). The special affinity between Islam and other Semitic religions is reflected in the permission accorded to inter-marriage between Muslim men and Jewish or Christian women and the permissibility of the flesh of animals slaughtered by Jews or Christians (Qur’an 5:5).

Following the conquest of Makka, the Prophet entered the city with his companions. The people of Makka were terrified and apprehensive about the likely prospect of their summary execution on the orders of the Prophet, for they had subjected him to the cruelest kind of humiliation and torture and had finally driven him out of the city. They stood before him in fear and trepidation. “What kind of treatment do you expect from me?”, he asked. They said in a trembling voice “You are our kind and affectionate brother. We expect the sort of treatment that is expected from a kind brother”. The Prophet smiled and said: “Today you will not be taken to task. Go, you are free!”. They could scarcely believe their ears and fell at his feet, overwhelmed as they were by the Prophet’s magnanimity and compassion.

Following the Prophet’s migration to Madina, Makka was faced with a severe drought. Since Makka was a barren desert, food grains had to be brought from other areas. Najd was the only area which was unaffected by the drought and could send food grains to Makka. A group of Muslim soldiers happened to capture an influential person from Najd, named Thamama ibn Athal. He was brought to Madina and taken to the Prophet. The Prophet invited him to the Islamic faith, which he refused and retorted that he was ready to pay ransom for his release. The Prophet ordered that he be tied to a pillar in the mosque. On his instruction, Thamama was provided with food. After a while the Prophet invited him again to embrace Islam, but in vain. A few days passed. Finally the Prophet ordered his release. He was so touched by the Prophet’s generosity and kindness that he fell at his feet and embraced Islam.

Thamama told the Prophet that food grains from his region of Najd were sent to Makka and if he permitted, he could block the supply. The Prophet agreed to the suggestion and Thamama blocked the supply of food grains to Makka, which caused a great deal of hardship

to the people there. They sent an emissary to the Prophet, who told him on their behalf that he had always preached love, compassion and charity and that the people of Makka were on the verge of starvation. The Prophet immediately dispatched a letter to Thamama, asking him to lift the blockage and restore the supply of food grains. He then sent 500 gold coins for the poor and destitute people in Makka.

The attitude and behaviour of the Prophet towards Jews and Christians in Madina exhibited remarkable tolerance, broad-mindedness and compassion. Some Jewish families lived in his neighbourhood in Madina. If one of their children fell sick, the Prophet would make it a point to visit the distressed family as a gesture of good will. If the funeral of a Jew passed by and if he was around, he would stand up as a mark of respect for the deceased.

Islam does not allow aggression. Only a defensive war is permitted (Qur'an 2:190). When the Prophet passed away, the area under the control of the Islamic state exceeded three million square kilometres. The cost involved in the conquest of this vast area, in terms of war casualties, was less than 300.

Islam's attitude towards other cultures

Since Islam is a universal religion, it is characterised not only by a great deal of inner strength and resilience but also by a substantial measure of openness and flexibility. It eschews the narrow path of xenophobia, ethnocentrism and exclusion. The Islamic attitude towards other cultural traditions is reflected in its view of the pursuit of knowledge and the learning of foreign languages, in the legitimacy accorded to regional customs and usages, in the adoption of foreign technology, and in the acceptance of foreign medicines as well as cultural patterns.

The Prophet is reported to have said: "Wisdom is (like) the lost animal of a Muslim; he catches hold of it wherever he finds it". The Prophet regarded the acquisition of knowledge as an obligation on every Muslim and exhorted his followers to carry the torch of learning far and wide. He warned against concealing or withholding knowledge. Islam opened the portals of knowledge and learning to all and sundry, men and women, rich and poor, high and low.

In the Battle of Badr, Muslims scored victory over the unbelievers and more than seventy prisoners-of-war were captured by them. Umar, who became the second caliph after the demise of the Prophet, suggested that they should be executed. (Incidentally, the Bible says that if the enemy is defeated in war, their men, women, old persons and children should be executed). Abu Bakr, who succeeded the Prophet as the head of the Islamic state, disagreed with this opinion and suggested that they should be set free in lieu of some ransom. The Prophet agreed with this suggestion. A ransom of four thousand *dirhams* or a hundred camels was fixed as ransom for each of the captives. Those who paid the ransom were set free. In the case of those who could not afford the ransom money, their relatives and friend came to their rescue and arranged for the ransom amount. Some of the captives had neither the ransom money nor friends or relatives who could pay the ransom money on their behalf, but they knew reading and writing. The Prophet declared that a captive, who is unable to pay the

ransom money but knows the art of writing, could secure his release by teaching ten Muslims children how to write. It was from one of these prisoners that Zayd ibn Thabit, who later served as the Prophet's secretary, learnt writing. Imam Bukhari has reported this incident under the caption: *sanction accorded to the appointment of pagans as teachers of Muslims*. Interestingly, a few of the prisoners had neither the capacity to pay the ransom money nor the ability to read and write. They were set free on their assurance that they would not wage a war against Muslims in the future.

The Prophet occasionally adorned Persian and Roman attire and advised the use of Indian medicines. Once, when one of his companions fell seriously ill, he advised him to consult a doctor in Madina who was a Christian. In the Battle of the Ditch, one of the companions, Salman the Persian, suggested the digging up of a wide ditch around the city of Madina as a defence strategy. The Prophet readily accepted the suggestion. In some of the battles fought during the time of the Prophet, foreign techniques of warfare were used without any reservations. The Prophet instructed his secretary Zayd ibn Thabit to learn Syriac, Hebrew and Persian languages so that he could carry on the Prophet's correspondence with foreign rulers. Islamic law recognises the validity of some of the local customs and usages, known as *Urf* and *Aadah* in legal parlance, in judicial pronouncements.

The Islamic attitude of openness towards other cultural traditions was evidence in later centuries as well. During the reign of the Abbasid caliph, al-Mansur (ruled 754-775 A.D.), a movement for the translation of the scientific, philosophical and literary works of ancient Greece, Egypt and India into Arabic was initiated. A number of Jewish, Christian, Hindu, Magian and Sabaeen scholars and translators, such as Hunayn ibn Ishaq or Johannitus (d. 877), Yuhanna ibn Masawayh (d. 873), Thabit ibn Qurra (d. 901), Abu Bishr Matta (d. 940) and Qusta ibn Luqa (d. 912), were associated with this movement. Hunayn ibn Ishaq, a Christian translator, was appointed head of the Academy of Science (*Dar al-Hikmah*) in Baghdad, established by caliph al-Mamun (d. 833A.D.). He also served as physician to caliph al-Mutawakkil. Ibn Maymun or Maimonides, one of the distinguished philosophers and translators, was a Spanish rabbi. Jurji ibn Bakhtishu (d. 880), a Christian, was appointed as a court physician by caliph al-Mansur. The group of translators included Ali ibn Abbas al-Majusi (d. 994), a Magian, and Mankah and Ibn Dahan, who were Hindus. Caliph Harun al-Rashid set up a large hospital in Baghdad under the supervision of a Christian physician Jibril ibn Bakhtishu.

Legal pluralism in the Islamic tradition

The twin sources of Islamic law, namely the Qur'an and the Prophet's *Sunnah*, provide the fundamental principles and precepts governing spiritual and temporal matters. These principles and precepts also provide sufficient scope for dealing with unforeseen situations and circumstances. Muslim jurists formulated two methodological principles for the interpretation and elucidation of Islamic law in the context of changing times and situations. These two principles are analogical deduction (*Qiyas*) and consensus among jurists and scholars (*Ijma*). In addition, they enunciated a rational and creative methodology for legal innovations (*Ijtihad*). All these methodological approaches were basically derived from the Qur'an and the Prophet's *Sunnah*.

During the early Islamic period, people directly turned to the Prophet for the clarification and elucidation of legal principles and rulings. After his demise, his companions migrated to different lands and set up study circles and schools there. With the passage of time, Muslims living in different cities and towns began to follow the legal opinions (*fatawa*) and judicial pronouncements of the companions who had settled there. Thus, the people of Madina generally followed the *fatawa* of Abdullah ibn Umar; the people of Kufa those of Abdullah ibn Masud; the people of Makka those of Abdullah ibn Abbas; the people of Egypt those of Abdullah ibn Amr ibn al-ʿAs. During the first three centuries of the Islamic era, several distinctive schools of jurisprudence emerged. These schools of jurisprudence were named after eminent jurists, including Hasan of Basrah (d. 728), Sufyan al-Thawri (d. 777), Awzai (d. 773), al-Tabari (d. 922) and Abu Thawr (d. 860), among others. Most of these schools died out with the passing away of their founders or shortly thereafter. Four major schools of jurisprudence, which flourished and have survived to this day, include those of Abu Hanifa (d. 767), Malik (d. 795), Shafii (d. 795) and Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 855).

Legal pluralism in the Islamic tradition is reflected at three distinct levels: (i) the coexistence and accommodation, rather than suppression, of different interpretations of Islamic law (ii) the cognisance of regional, local practices and usages in judicial pronouncements and legal rulings (iii) the tolerance and accommodation of sectarian and denominational differences.

The Prophet's Companions (*Sahabah*) and the Followers (*Tabiun*) had certain differences in matters of jurisprudence, legal pronouncements and religious rituals. Some of them recited the *Bismillah* aloud in prayers while others preferred to recite it quietly. Some recited the *Qunut* in the pre-dawn prayers while others did not. In spite of such differences they never hesitated to follow one another in congregational prayers. Imam Shafii considered frogs, crabs and tortoises impermissible for eating while some other jurists did not prohibit their eating.

Islamic law (*Shariah*) follows the path of ease and convenience for people, and eschews the path of hardship and inconvenience. An eminent Muslim jurist Ibn al-Qayyim says: "The basis of the Islamic *Shariah* is wisdom and welfare of the people in this world and in the Hereafter. This welfare lies in complete justice, mercy, well-being and wisdom. Any thing that replaces justice with oppression, mercy with harshness, welfare with misery and wisdom with folly, has nothing to do with the *Shariah*". As we shall presently see, several eminent jurists, scholars and men of piety have viewed legal differences in terms of convenience and ease for the common people. One of the important methodological principles in the Hanafi school of jurisprudence is *al-Masalih al-Mursalah*, which emphasises the greater good and the convenience of people in legal rulings and pronouncements.

In spite of differences in legal pronouncements and rulings, the scholars and jurists of the early Islamic period had tremendous regard and respect for one another. They never doubted the honesty, integrity and sincerity of their contemporaries. They never allowed differences in legal matters to affect inter-personal relationships. Imam Abu Ishaq al-Shatibi (d.730) has perceptively observed: "If a new issue leads to differences among people, without causing hostility, malice, ill will or division, we regard it as a part of Islam. But if a

new issue results in creating animosity and incrimination among Muslims, if it causes the snapping of the bonds of brotherhood, it has nothing to do with Islam.”

Sometimes, the scholars of yore abstained from performing some of the religious rituals which they considered obligatory, out of deference for their seniors. When Imam Shafii visited the tomb of Imam Abu Hanifa in Baghdad and it was time for the pre-dawn prayers, he did not recite the *Qunut* prayers which, in his opinion, were obligatory. When someone questioned him about this, he replied, pointing to the tomb of Imam Abu Hanifa: “How could I do so before this Imam, who did not think that the *Qunut* prayers are obligatory in the pre-dawn prayers.”

The early scholars, jurists and men of learning viewed the legal differences among their predecessors and contemporaries, not as a bane, but as a blessing in disguise. Sufyan al-Thawri, for example, used to say: “Do not say that the Ulama have differed in such and such matter; say, instead, that they have provided convenience and ease for the people (by their difference of opinion).” Abu Yusuf and Muhammad ibn Hasan al-Shaybani, the distinguished followers of Imam Abu Hanifa, had certain differences in matters of jurisprudence and legal pronouncements with their mentor. Yet, their opinions were incorporated in the corpus of Hanafi jurisprudence. Hanafi scholars and jurists have maintained that there is nothing objectionable if Hanafi scholars and jurists reach a consensus in respect of an extraordinary case in an extraordinary situation, whereby they give a legal opinion in accordance with the principles and tenets of the Maliki school of jurisprudence, rather than with those of their own Hanafi school. Thus, Hanafi scholars and jurists in the pre-Independence period gave a ruling, based on scholarly consensus, in regard to the dissolution of a Muslim woman’s marriage whose husband has left her with no trace of his whereabouts.

In the early Islamic period, some rulers sought to bring about uniformity and homogenization in legal matters under the auspices of the state. However, they were dissuaded by eminent scholars and jurists from doing so. During the caliphate of Umar ibn Abd al Aziz, it was suggested that he should bring about uniformity and consensus in respect of legal rulings, to which he replied: “I would not have been very happy if Muslim scholars had not had any differences in legal matters. The companions of the Prophet had certain differences in legal matters. Therefore, any one who follows the precepts of any of the companions is on the right path”. He then circulated an order through the Islamic territories to the effect that the people of every region should abide by the ruling over which the local scholars and jurists had reached a consensus.

Once the Abbasid caliph al-Mansur told Imam Malik that he proposed to circulate copies of the Imam’s books in every city and town, with the instruction that people should follow only these books. Imam Malik dissuaded the caliph from doing any thing of the kind. He told him that people in different cities were following the rulings of local scholars and jurists and that it was advisable to allow this situation to continue. Likewise, caliph Harun al-Rashid told Imam Malik that he wished to have the latter’s celebrated work *Al-Muwatta* to be hung in the Ka’bah, so that the Muslim masses could follow it in a uniform manner. Imam Malik advised him not to do so.

More than one-third of Muslims across the world are living as minorities in non-Muslim countries. These Muslim minorities are faced with a number of problems and challenges. This situation has led some contemporary Muslim scholars and jurists to re-examine some of the principles enunciated in the classical works of Islamic jurisprudence. They argue that there is a need to rethink some of the important issues in Islamic jurisprudence, including the traditional dichotomy between the Abode of Islam (*Dar al-Islam*) and the Abode of War (*Dar al-Harb*), the relations between Muslims and non-Muslims in plural and multicultural societies, the participation of Muslims in secular politics, coping with the pressures and challenges of secularization, and the constraints on Islamic family laws and on the maintenance of Islamic identity. In 1994, the North American *Fiqh* Council announced a project to develop a distinctive body of jurisprudence for Muslims living in non-Muslim countries. Dr. Taha Jabir al-Alwani, chairman of the Council, has used the term Jurisprudence of the Minorities (*Fiqh al-Aqalliyyah*) and has argued that this constitutes an autonomous body of jurisprudence based on the principle of the relevance of Islamic laws to the conditions and circumstances peculiar to a particular community. He also argues that the traditional categories of *Dar al-Islam* and *Dar al-Harb* are no longer relevant in the contemporary context. The eminent Egyptian scholar Dr. Yusuf al-Qaradawi has carried the argument further in his books *Fiqh al-Aqalliyyah al-Muslimin* (in Arabic) and *Fiqh of Muslim Minorities* (in English).

Ethnicity in Islamic perspective

Ethnicity, which is an important aspect of the contemporary discourse of pluralism, refers to the positive consciousness of belonging to a group. Factors such as religion, culture, language and a sense of shared identity constitute the key components and markers of ethnicity. Undoubtedly, ethnicity plays an important role in fostering social solidarity and cohesiveness and in providing a sense of belonging and rootedness to the individual. In actual fact, ethnicity is a Janus-faced phenomenon in the sense that it has both benign as well as negative implications and consequences. In the *Hadith* literature, the negative and socially disruptive implications and consequences of ethnicity are described as *Asabiyyah* or ethnocentrism. The Prophet defined *Asabiyyah* as helping one's own people in a manner that is morally wrong. He said: "He who invites people to *Asabiyyah* is not one of us; he who fights for it is not one of us; he who dies for the sake of it is not one of us." One day a scuffle took place between a Migrant (*Muhajir*) and a Helper (*Ansari*). Both called out to their respective groups for help. When the Prophet heard about this incident, he expressed displeasure over it and remarked: "Why do you raise slogans like those of the age of ignorance (*Jahiliyyah*)? Give them up; they stink." A companion asked the Prophet whether loving one's own people was also a part of *Asabiyyah*, to which he replied in the negative and added: "*Asabiyyah* is helping one's community in matters of injustice and oppression."

The renowned philosopher and sociologist Ibn Khaldun (d.1406), in his celebrated work *Muqaddimah*, has dwelt at considerable length on the social significance and functions of *Asabiyyah* and on its bearing on political processes, especially on the establishment of political power. However, while he takes a largely instrumentalist view of ethnicity, he fails to take cognisance of the negative and dysfunctional implications and consequences of *Asabiyyah*.

Islam and the Making of Indian Civilization

Professor A. R. Momin

The comparative study of complex cultures and civilizations presents us with two significant and inter-related facts: the wide range of cultural diversities across, as well as within, cultures and civilizations, and the universality of cultural exchange, cross-fertilization and coalescence. All civilizations have been composed of diverse ethnic groups and cultural communities with their distinctive cultural traditions and identities. All civilizations had to grapple with the problematic interface between diversity and unity and had to work out some kind of reconciliation and synthesis. Civilizations evolve through a dynamic process of borrowing and adaptation, accommodation and assimilation, hybridization and cross-fertilization of ideas, artifacts, social institutions and cultural patterns. The American anthropologist Alfred Kroeber has perceptively observed that the essence of a civilization is not in its being but in its becoming. The classical Greek civilization, for example, was a mixture of primitive Greek, Minoan, Egyptian and Asian elements. The Japanese civilization is partly autochthonous, partly Chinese, partly Indian, and partly Western (Kroeber,1972:259).

Diversity and Unity in Indian Civilization

Since the middle of the second millennium BC, Indian civilization has drawn several migrant groups and communities to its fold. The advent of the Indo-Aryans, the Tibeto-Burman-speaking Mongoloid people, Kushanas, Sakas, Greeks, Huns, Arabs, Turks, Persians, Afghans and Mongols in the ancient and medieval periods and the Portuguese, Dutch, French and English people in later times testifies to the pervasiveness of the migration process in India. In the course of time, most of these migrant groups adapted themselves to local conditions and were influenced by the languages, beliefs and cultural patterns of the indigenous people. The extensive and protracted process of interaction, exchange and mutual adaptation among the various groups and communities brought about India's characteristic diversity and a composite structure of culture and civilization. The Indian subcontinent has witnessed one of the most creative and ingenious experiments in cultural cross-fertilization spanning five millennia. The fabric of Indian civilization has been woven from strands and shades of varying textures and hues drawn from a variety of sources. This fact is borne out by archaeological and historical evidence, philological and linguistic researches, textual and literary sources, and studies in folklore.

Archaeological evidence points to the existence of commercial and cultural relations between the borderlands of north-western India and Iran and Central Asia even before the dawn of the Indus Civilization (Possehl,1982:79). The Indus Civilization had extensive trade and cultural relations with Mesopotamia, Persia, Afghanistan and the Mediterranean world. The migration of the Indo-Aryans from south central Asia into the Indian subcontinent began from 1500 BC onwards. Three facts about the advent and settlement of the Indo-Aryans are note-worthy. First, there seems to be a striking similarity between Vedic gods and goddesses and ancient Iranian and Hittite deities (Kosambi, 1987:72-91; Chattopadhyaya, 1978:43).

Secondly, the Indo-Aryans were ethnically a mixed people. Thirdly, the Indo-Aryans, who were pastoral nomads, adopted the technology and occupational pattern of the Indus people who were urban-based agriculturists and of the Dravidian-speaking indigenous people. Interestingly, the Rg Veda contains at least 25 Dravidian loan words, including agricultural terms which do not occur in other Indo-European languages (Sharma, R.S.,1999:45). Punjabi and Haryanavi, for example, have quite a few Dravidian agricultural terms (Trautmann,1979:164). The presence of proto-Dravidian in vocabulary, syntax and phonetics in Vedic literature is fairly well established. The later Vedic texts display an even greater admixture of Dravidian words (Burrow, 1965; Deshpande,1995:67-84; Thapar, 1992:11, 94). The Austric languages, which are still spoken by some tribal communities in eastern and central India, also influenced Sanskrit and other Indo-European languages. Certain kinds of echo-formations which are characteristic of Austric languages found their way into Indo-Aryan speeches. For example, the most commonly used word for plough in Vedic literature, *Langala*, was derived from Mundari, one of the Austric languages.

There are frequent references in Vedic and post-Vedic literature to the migration of foreign people, including the Yavana, Pahlava, Saka, Kushana, Parada, China and Abhira (Sharma, R.S.,1958:32; Thapar,1979:152-159). Many myths and folk traditions, particularly about Aryavrata, Balhika, Himavanta, Meru, Uttarakuru and Uttaramadra, in later Vedic texts, early Pali texts and in the epics and the Puranas suggest migration of people (Sharma, R.S.,1999:99). The Sama Veda refers to a ritual whereby non-Aryans were admitted into the mainstream of Vedic society. Manu mentions that several foreign tribes who came in contact with the Aryan people were accorded a place within the fold of Hindu society. Many foreign tribes, such as the Saka, Kamboja and China, were included in the four-fold organisation of Hindu society. They were described in the classical sources as *varnasankara* or mixed castes (Bose,1967:207-208; Bhattacharyya,1998: 250). The Atharva Veda refers to the Vratyas who were outside the fold of Hinduism. The Brahmans made considerable efforts to draw them to the mainstream of Vedic society. The Saka or the Scythians, who entered India around the first century BC, were accorded a Kshatriya status (Thapar,1979:176-177). The cult of sun-worship was brought to India by the Maga people who came to India around the first century BC from Sakadvip or Persia. Initially, they were not admitted into all the rituals and ceremonies but subsequently they came to be absorbed into Vedic society and came to be known as Sakadvip or Maga Brahmans (Bhandarkar,1913:153-155; Jairajbhay, 1963:153; Joshi,1975:179; Walker, 1968:3).

The classical literature provides ample evidence of inter-marriages between the Indo-Aryans and other groups, both foreign and indigenous. The Vedic texts refer to Aryans of *Dasa* descent (*dasiputra Brahmans*), who were a progeny of Brahmans and slaves (Sharma, R.S., 1958: 63-64; Thapar, 1992:84). The later sources mention the Abhira Brahmans, who were contemptuously described as *Mleccha* because they were a product of inter-marriage between Brahmans and the untouchable Ambastha caste (Thapar,1975:31). A seventh century inscription from south India mentions the Boya Brahmans, the Boyas were otherwise described as a Shudra tribe. There were inter-marriages between the Brahmans and the forest-dwelling Naga tribe. It is significant that Naga genealogies and myths are accorded a prominent place in the opening canto of the Mahabharata (Kosambi, 1987:94;

Thapar,1979:122-151). It is also interesting to note that, in the folk tradition, some of Krishna's sixteen thousand wives seem to be of foreign extraction (Kosambi, 1987:116).

Pluralism and Syncretism in Hinduism

The process of Aryanization or Sanskritization often entailed the adoption of Sanskrit names, rituals and customs. However, it did not always bring about uniformity and homogenization. The adoption of Brahmanical customs and rituals was often a selective process. Furthermore, it was blended with regional customs. For example, the Brahmanic institution of *gotra* was adopted by non-Brahman, including tribal, communities in different ways. In some cases, Brahmanic gotras were blended with regional and folk customs. From early times, tribal and folk cults and ritual practices were incorporated into Brahmanism. Totemic deities such as fish, tortoise and boar were made into incarnations of Vishnu (Kosambi, 1987:170). Shiva was formed by a fusion of the Vedic Rudra with some non-Aryan deity, including the Indus deity, which has been described as proto-Shiva (Chattopadhyaya, 1978: 47, 91-92; Bhandarkar,1913:104). Narayani and Durga, manifestations of Shiva's consort, which were associated with non-Aryan tribes, came to be absorbed into classical Hinduism (Thapar,1992:178-179; Gonda, 1976; Shivapadasundaram,1934). Similarly, the deities of tribals and low-caste groups were absorbed by Brahmanism. Serpent worship and phallus worship, which found their way into Hinduism, were taken over from forest-dwelling tribal communities. Heterodox sects and cults, including the Shakta and Tantra traditions, incorporated several esoteric features from indigenous and tribal cultures (Woodroffe, 1951; Bharati, 1965; Dasgupta, 1962).

The foregoing discussion makes it fairly clear that the Hindu religious tradition and Hindu society have been internally differentiated and pluralistic rather than monolithic and homogeneous. Pluralism has been one of the quintessential features of Hinduism at the metaphysical as well as socio-cultural level. For example, it is believed that if two *Śruti* traditions are in conflict, both are to be held as valid and authentic. The epics, in both textual as well as folk forms, bear the imprint of pluralism. For instance, the Ramayana has several versions or variants (Raghavan,1980; Richman,1992). A.L. Basham has observed, "Hinduism can absorb new ideas and can, if need be, find room for new gods; moreover, every passage in the Hindu sacred texts is open to figurative interpretation, so that it is possible for different schools of Hinduism to hold diametrically opposed doctrines without serious antagonism" (Basham,1958). There exists a rich tradition of heterodoxy, agnosticism and atheism in the Hindu philosophical tradition. The literature in the atheistic and agnostic tradition in the Sanskrit and Pali languages is larger than that of any other classical language. In the fourteenth century, Madhavacharya's book *Sarvadarshansamgraha* devoted the first chapter to arguments in favour of the atheistic position (Sen, 2001). The pluralistic ethos of Hinduism is also reflected in the wide range of beliefs and ideas, in social organisation, in rituals and ceremonies, and in behaviour patterns (Karve,1961:1-14). R.S. Sharma has rightly commented that Hinduism encompasses a pluralistic cultural universe (Momin,1996: viii).

From early times, Hinduism appears to an amalgam or synthesis of Aryan, Dravidian, tribal, folk and other elements. In other words, Hinduism has been a "mosaic of distinct cults, deities, sects and ideas" as Romila Thapar (1992:68) has perceptively observed. Syncretism

within the fold of Hinduism is conspicuously evidenced in the survival of non-Aryan deities, rituals and ceremonies in villages which have been in the heartland of Hindu expansion (Marriott,1955:209-210).

The process of acculturation and integration has been extensively at work at the regional level. Though all groups or communities in Indian society have their distinct identities, they do not exist in a social or cultural vacuum. Rather, they are knit together in a dynamic network of reciprocity, interaction and exchange. The sharing of space, village identity, and material and cultural traits at the regional level cuts across religious and sectarian differences and binds the people together (Singh, 1992; Singh,1999). The distribution of material traits at the regional level indicates a significant complementarity in that it is marked by both local differentiation and inter-penetration. Often, a cluster or complex of material traits at the regional level unites different groups and communities (Bose,1961).

Islam in India

The commercial and cultural relations between India and Arabia go back to pre-Islamic times. During the pre-Islamic period as well as during the time of Prophet Muhammad (569-632), a wide variety of Indian goods and commodities, including camphor, sandalwood, spices, perfumes, medicinal substances, coconut, timber, cloth, precious stones and swords were exported to Arabia. Indian goods were sold in the bazaars of Hadramawt, Suhar, Yemen and Aden in Arabia and thence taken to Iran, Egypt and the Byzantine empire. Some people of Indian origin had settled in Arabia even before the birth of Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet is reported to have made a mention of some Indian substances, such as musk, camphor and costus. He recommended the use of the Indian costus for tonsillitis and respiratory ailments. After his demise some of his companions visited India. Long before the conquest of Sindh by Muhammad ibn Qasim in 712 AD, Arab traders and merchants had settled along the coast of Kerala and Gujarat.

Migrations, Conquests and Cultural Diffusion

There is a tendency in certain circles to characterize the advent of Muslims in India exclusively in terms of barbaric invasions and conquests. This is nothing but a distortion of history. For one thing, the various groups of Muslims who entered India at different points of time did not comprise a culturally homogeneous category. They were differentiated in respect of ethnicity, occupation and motivation. For example, the first wave of Muslims who entered India in the seventh century included traders, merchants, scholars and men of piety. They were followed, in the course of time, by artisans, craftsmen, Sufi saints, men of letters, poets, soldiers and conquerors. In the 13th century, when Mongol hordes overran and devastated the famed cities of Samarkand, Bukhara, Herat, Nishapur, Merv, Balkh and Khwarizm, thousands of artisans, craftsmen and men of letters took refuge in Lahore, Delhi, Badaun and other Indian cities. These people underwent a process of adaptation and indigenization (Misra,1974). They adopted local languages and cultural patterns. Many of them married local women. The descendants of Muslims of foreign descent in India--Arabs, Turks, Afghans, Iranians, Mughals etc--constitute less than ten percent of the total Muslim population in the country. In most cases, their cultural traditions and identities have been

diluted or lost as a result of inter-marriages with the local people as well as a long drawn out process of indigenization. An overwhelming majority of Indian Muslims are of indigenous origin and share genetic and biological traits as well as local languages and dialects, material traits, customs and cultural features with the rest of the Indian population.

It is often argued that conquests bring in their train only barbaric destruction and devastation. This is only partially true. History testifies to the fact that invasions and conquests have negative as well as positive consequences. Conquests bring about contacts and interactions between peoples and cultures and thereby lead to the diffusion of technology, ideas, inventions and innovations, architectural and literary styles and cultural traits. The conquest of Spain by the Arabs in the seventh century served as a catalyst in the hybridization and cross-fertilization of ideas, science and technology, medicine, philosophy, architecture, crafts, music and literature. The Mongol invasion of Asia and Europe in the 13th century brought in its train the transmission and diffusion of technology, including the use of gun powder, magnetic compass, printing and the spinning wheel from Central Asia and China to Europe. One of the significant and enduring consequences of the Crusades was the diffusion, from Islamic lands to Europe, of medical arts and hospitals, public baths, musical instruments, dyes and gun powder, windmills and water wheels, compass, astronomical and surgical instruments, and perfumes and sugar.

The Indian subcontinent has been exposed to foreign invasions much before the Arab, Turkish, Afghan and Persian conquests. The Muslim conquest of India brought about substantial technological, military, political, economic, social and cultural changes in Indian society. As mentioned in the foregoing, the Turkish, Afghan and Persian conquests of India brought in their wake the migration of thousands of skilled craftsmen, artisans, engineers, men of letters and poets. The development of India's composite civilization, especially in the fields of architecture, arts and crafts and languages and literary styles, owes much to their skills, craftsmanship and ingenuity. In the wake of Muslim conquests came right-angle gearing, very important for water lifting, as also the spinning wheel (Habib,1994:13). The windmill was not a Greek or Roman or European invention; it was invented by Muslims. The Arab geographer Al-Masudi saw windmills in Persia in the ninth century AD. The European references to windmills appear three centuries later. The windmills set up by Muslims in several parts of India, including the one at Aurangabad in Maharashtra, are among the marvels of medieval technology and engineering. Muslims introduced pedals in looms which accelerated the speed of weaving. Sericulture was introduced by Muslims in Bengal and Kashmir. The Turks introduced cavalry in armed combat, which brought about qualitative changes in techniques of warfare. It is interesting to note that, in Sanskrit sources, the Turkish sultans of Delhi are described as *Ashwapati* or lords of horses (Nizami,1961:82). Another significant military innovation introduced by the Turks in the Indian subcontinent was the use of artillery. The use of gun powder and cannon are reported, for the first time, during the Bahmani siege of Adoni in Tamil Nadu in 1366. The extensive use of gun powder and cannon brought about far reaching changes in techniques of warfare and in defence strategies (Momin,1998).

One of the highly important and enduring contributions made by Muslims to the development of Indian civilization was the introduction of paper. The invention of paper

can be traced to the year 105 AD when Tsai Lun, an official attached to the imperial court in China, created a sheet of paper using mulberry and other fibres together with old rags and hemp waste. The Chinese kept the technique of paper making a closely guarded secret for well over six centuries. In 751, a war took place between the Chinese and the Arabs in Samarkand. The Chinese lost the war and a number of Chinese soldiers were captured as prisoners-of-war by the Arabs. The Arabs set a condition that the Chinese prisoners could secure their release by teaching them the technique of paper making, to which the latter agreed. Muslims contributed to the craft of paper making in three important and ingenious ways. First, Chinese paper was made from mulberry and young bamboo shoots, as a result of which it was quite delicate and expensive. Muslims experimented with linen, cordage and rags, which made the paper sturdy and much less expensive. Secondly, they introduced certain ingenious techniques such as maceration of rags with a stamping mill. Thirdly, unlike the Chinese, Muslims did not keep the knowledge of paper making to themselves. Instead, they disseminated it far and wide (Hunter, 1947; Momin, 2001). The first paper factory was set up in Baghdad in 793 and in a relatively short time, paper factories sprang up in Samarkand, Damascus, Egypt, Morocco and Andalusia. Paper began to be exported from Andalusia, Sicily and Morocco to Europe. Paper factories were set up in Europe four centuries later in the 13th century. In ancient India, the leaves of the aloe tree and the palmyra tree were used for writing purposes. During the medieval period, paper began to be imported from Baghdad, Samarkand, Damascus and other cities of the Islamic world. Muslim rulers set up paper factories in Bihar, Kalpi, Jaunpur, Aurangabad and Kashmir. King Zainul Abideen introduced paper in the Kashmir valley in 1420 (Momin, 2001).

It is commonly believed that the Muslim conquest of India was motivated by the proselytizing zeal, that Muslim kings and emperors forcibly converted the local people to Islam, and that Muslim rule over India was marked by fanaticism, bigotry and oppression. The fact of the matter is that the Turkish, Afghan and Mughal invasions of India were motivated, not by the Islamic spirit, but by material considerations such as territorial expansion and economic or financial gains. Similarly, in the conversion of large masses of people to Islam, the use of force was an exception rather than a rule (Arnold, 1997: 81-82, 157-158, 173-174; Ahmad, 1964: 82). Dr. Rajendra Prasad has observed, "The attitude of the Muslim conquerors had, on the whole, been one of toleration and, in spite of the fanatical zeal manifested by some of them at times, it may be safely asserted that there had been a continuous effort from the earliest days to deal with the Hindus fairly" (Prasad, 1946: 86; Sharma, S.R., 1954: 8). Following the conquest of Sindh, Muhammad ibn Qasim decided to allow the civil and revenue administration to remain in the hands of the local people. This policy was followed in the Delhi Sultanate as well. The finance and revenue departments of the state continued to be run by Hindu officials. This process was accelerated during the Mughal emperor Akbar's reign. He gave charge of revenue administration to Raja Todar Mal, which had far-reaching consequences. During Aurangzeb's reign, Jaswant Singh was appointed the governor of Gujarat. The tolerant and sagacious policies pursued by the Muslim rulers in India are also reflected in land grants bestowed by them for the maintenance and upkeep of Hindu and Jain temples. Emperor Aurangzeb, who is often maligned as a fanatic and a destroyer of Hindu temples, granted endowments and *jagir* to scores of Hindu and Jain temples across the country. Temple authorities and priests in the Someshwarnath Mahadev temple in Allahabad, the Jangambadi

Shiva temple in Varanasi and the Vrindavan temple have preserved the original *firman*s granted by Aurangzeb. Tipu Sultan used to regularly send gifts to 156 temples in Mysore.

The spread of Islam in the Indian subcontinent owes much to the sincerity, tolerance, compassion and human sympathies of Sufi saints. They set up their spiritual centres or *khanqahs* in the midst of the settlements of the masses, conversed with them in the local dialects, shared their joys and sorrows, and tried to mitigate their suffering in various ways. In Kashmir, for example, the first person to embrace Islam was a tribal leader from Ladakh named Ranchan. Ranchan, who ruled over Kashmir in 1320-1323, was influenced by a Sufi saint Bulbul Shah. Sufism exercised a significant influence on the Bhakti movement. The emphasis placed by the Bhakti movement on devotion to a personal God, egalitarianism and its disdain for empty ritualism and religious obscurantism were inspired by the teachings of the Sufis.

Syncretism in Architecture, Arts and Crafts

The contribution of Indian Muslims to the promotion and development of architecture, arts and crafts forms a magnificent part of India's composite civilizational heritage. Monuments of Indo-Islamic architecture, particularly in Delhi and Agra, exhibit a creative and exquisite blend of Saracenic, Persian and Central Asian architectural styles and motifs, on the one hand, and Rajput and Jain styles, on the other. Arcuate and brick construction by the use of the arch, construction of dome, and cementing by lime and gypsum were introduced in India by the Muslims. Muslim architects, engineers, masons and craftsmen innovated new techniques of decoration in brick work, tile work and wood carving. They adapted existing designs and devised new ones. They made an ingenious use of local materials and regional motifs and patterns. All this gave Indo-Islamic architecture a rich diversity of design, style and pattern. In addition, an over-arching Islamic pattern was superimposed on this diversity, which was marked by large spaces, a powerful and imposing geography, a pervasive sense of harmony, functional significance, aesthetic elegance, and an extensive use of ornamental calligraphy (Hark, 1968). Indo-Islamic architecture had a far-reaching impact on architectural styles and patterns through the length and breadth of the country. Interestingly, even Hindu temple architecture was influenced by Islamic architectural designs and motifs. The temple of Govinda Deva in Mysore, for example, has a porch covered by a vault with radiating arches in the style of Indo-Islamic architecture.

Muslim artisans and craftsmen introduced a variety of materials and pigments, including glass, lapis lazuli and cobalt blue. Glass was manufactured in Baghdad, Egypt, Persia and Andalusia as early as the ninth century. Muslim craftsmen developed the technique of enamelling glass, which travelled to different parts of the world, including India and Europe, during the Middle Ages. Muslim craftsmen excelled in the art of inlaying intricate designs in bronze, brass and silver. They perfected the technique of inlaying wood with ivory, bone and mother-of-pearl.

Carpet weaving was introduced in the Kashmir valley, under Turkish and Persian influence, by king Zainul Abideen. The art of lacquered papier-mache was introduced in Kashmir by

Persian artists and craftsmen under Mughal patronage. The famed blue pottery of Jaipur and Khurja bears the unmistakable influence of Persian and Central Asian techniques and motifs. Similarly, Mughal and Rajput miniature painting has been influenced by Persian art. Mughal miniature paintings are widely appreciated for their arabesque designs, depiction of minute details and the vibrancy of colours. The Renaissance artists were greatly fascinated by them. Rembrandt (d.1669) had a personal collection of more than two dozen Mughal and Deccani paintings, which he copied in his inimitable style. Muslim artists introduced several kinds of colouring materials, which were used by artists in different parts of the country. Lapis Lazuli, which was used in the Ajanta paintings, was brought from Persia.

The contribution of Indian Muslims to the promotion and development of Indian classical music, both instrumental and vocal, is generally known and widely appreciated. Amir Khusraw has a legendary reputation in this field. Masters and practitioners of Indian classical music enjoyed the patronage of Muslim rulers. Pundarik Vitthal of Karnataka composed several works in classical music at the instance of Shah Burhan Khan of Khandesh. When Khandesh was conquered by Emperor Akbar in 1599, Pundarik Vitthal joined Akbar's court. An accomplished musician, Chatur Damodar, was attached to the court of Emperor Jahangir. The association of Muslim musicians with the rich tradition of Indian classical music continues to this day.

Syncretism in Languages and Literary Traditions

Five inter-related dimensions of the contribution of Muslims to the enrichment of Indian languages and literary traditions are note-worthy: (i) the patronage of Sanskrit language and Sanskrit scholars by Muslim rulers (ii) compositions in Sanskrit by Muslim scholars and poets (iii) translation of Sanskrit works into Persian and Arabic (iv) the impact of Arabic, Persian and Turkish languages on Indian languages in respect of vocabulary, phonetics and script (v) contribution to the development of regional languages.

Sanskrit scholars and poets were honoured and patronised by several Muslim kings and emperors, including Emperor Akbar and king Zainul Abideen of Kashmir. Uday Raj, an eminent Sanskrit poet, was attached to the court of Sultan Muhammad Beg of Gujarat. He composed a poetic work in praise of the Sultan. Emperor Firuz Tughluq commissioned the translation of important Sanskrit works into Persian. A treatise on Hindu astronomy and astrology was translated into Persian under the title *Dalal-I-Firuz Shahi*. Sultan Zainul Abideen of Kashmir (1420-1470) commissioned the translation of the Mahabharata into the Kashmiri language. By the order of Alauddin Husain Shah, the Sultan of Gaur (1493-1518), the Mahabharata was translated into Bengali. Emperor Akbar, who was a great admirer and patron of Indian culture and learning, commissioned the translation of the Atharva Veda into Persian. The Mahabharata, Ramayana and some of the Puranas were also rendered into Persian under the royal commission. It is estimated that about 90 Persian translations of the Ramayana are in existence. Some of them have been printed; others are in the form of manuscripts. Emperor Akbar's revenue minister Todar Mal translated the Bhagvata Puran into Persian. The patronage of Sanskrit continued in the reign of Jahangir, Shahjahan and Aurangzeb. Aurangzeb's courtiers included Sanskrit scholars and poets like Indrajit Tripathi and Samant. Prince Dara Shikoh, who was well versed in Sanskrit, translated the Upanishads

into Persian in 1656. Most of these translations have survived the vicissitudes of time and are preserved in the India Office Library and the British Museum. In the 18th century, a French scholar Anquetil du Perron rendered Dara Shikoh's Persian translation of the Upanishads into Latin under the title *Oupnekhet*. It was published in Paris in 1801. The celebrated German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (d.1860) turned into an admirer of Indian philosophy after reading this translation. Several Muslim scholars were well versed in Sanskrit. The great Indianist Al-Biruni (d.1051) studied Sanskrit under the tutelage of Brahman scholars and translated some Sanskrit works of a scientific nature, including *Brahma Siddhanta* and *Kalpayara*, into Arabic. He is also said to have written a treatise in astronomy in Sanskrit called *Kiran Tilak*. Abdur-Rahim Khan-I-Khanan, Abul Fazl and Faizi, the well-known courtiers of Emperor Akbar, were well versed in Sanskrit and Hindi. Abul Fazl and Faizi translated the Ramayana into Persian. Khan-I-Khanan composed *Shlokas* which were half in Sanskrit and half in Hindi. Shaista Khan, one of the generals of Emperor Aurangzeb, composed poetry in Sanskrit. Ghulam ali Azad Bilgrami, a distinguished writer and poet who lived in the 18th century, was conversant with Sanskrit.

As a result of prolonged and extensive cultural and linguistic interaction between Hindus and Muslims during the medieval period, a large number of Arabic, Persian and Turkish words found their way into the vocabulary of Indian languages. It is interesting to note that the word Hindu is of Persian origin. The Persepolis and Naqsh-I-Rustam inscriptions of Darius (d. 486 BC) refer to the frontier regions of the Indus as Hindush. The term was later used in Arabic geographical and historical sources (Sircar,1965:7; Wink, 1990:5). The *Ramcharitmanas* of Tulsidas, an Avadhi version of the Ramayana, contains a fairly large number of Arabic and Persian words.⁽¹⁾ The scripts of Kashmiri, Sindhi, Punjabi (in the pre-Partition days) and Urdu have been derived from the Persian script.

Indian Muslims have made a highly significant contribution to the development of regional languages and literary traditions. The contribution of the Sufis to the promotion of regional languages and dialects is particularly note-worthy. The earliest extant specimen of Hindwi, the prototype of Urdu and Hindi, are to be found in the Sufi literature. The early Hindwi poets such as Masud Sa'ad Salman (d.1121) and Amir Khusraw (d.1325) drew inspiration from the Sufi masters and composed their literary works in the local idiom. In the Deccan, Gesu Daraz(d.1422) and other Sufi writers and poets were among the early pioneers of Urdu literature.

India's composite heritage is pre-eminently reflected in the development and efflorescence of Urdu. One need not belabour the point that Urdu is deeply rooted in the Indian tradition. Three-fourth of its vocabulary is derived from Sanskrit and Prakrit and only one-fourth from Arabic, Persian and Turkish languages. Its grammatical structure is almost the same as that of other Indo-European languages. The beginnings of early Urdu literature can be traced to the Deccan in the 16th century. Dakhani Urdu literature is deeply imbued with Indian folklore, imagery and symbolism. The variety and range of religious literature in Urdu testifies to its plural and composite character. All the major scriptures of Hinduism, including the four Vedas, the epics, the Upanishads, four of the Puranas and Manusmruti have been translated into Urdu. There exist more than 200, full or partial, Urdu translations of the Ramayana. Several translations of the Mahabharata and at least sixteen translations of

the Bhagwat Gita exist in Urdu. In the 19th century, a number of Urdu journals and weeklies were devoted to the defence and propagation of Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism, Christianity and Islam. During the early decades of the 20th century, Urdu served as a popular and effective medium of the anti-colonial struggle. The revolutionary writings of Urdu poets and writers, who included Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, fired the patriotic fervour of the Indian people.

The joint participation of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in the anti-colonial struggle forms a magnificent chapter of Indian history and symbolises the sustained vitality of India's composite civilization.

India's Composite Civilization and the Nationalist Discourse

Since the 19th century, one can discern two distinctive and contrasting strands in the nationalist discourse in India. One may be characterised as ethnonationalism or Hindu nationalism, which is premised on a conflation of nationalism and ethnicity, particularly religious revivalism, and on the assimilation of the minorities and other marginalized communities into the culture of the majority. The other is based on a shared political discourse, as reflected in equality, citizenship and fundamental rights. The assimilationist ideology is camouflaged and expressed in many forms, including cultural nationalism, national mainstream and national ethos. It is necessary and important to deconstruct the rhetoric of the assimilationist agenda. The agenda has three major premises or presuppositions. First, the assimilationist ideology presupposes that India is socially and culturally homogeneous and that it has a homogeneous national culture. Secondly, the assimilationist ideology identifies the national culture with the beliefs, rituals, institutions and cultural traditions of Hinduism. Thirdly, the assimilationist agenda sends out a clear message to the minorities and other ethnic groups that they should assimilate themselves in the national mainstream. The subtle message is that they should identify themselves with India's Hindu past, Hindu mythology and Hindu religious and cultural traditions.

All the three premises or presuppositions are fallacious and untenable for the following reasons. First, the assumption that India has a homogeneous national culture flies in the face of the country's historically embedded and pervasive diversity. This diversity exists at three distinct levels. First, it exists within the fold of Hinduism, in beliefs, ritual practices and cultural traditions. Secondly, the scale and range of diversities in India is truly extraordinary. They encompass morphological and genetic variations, languages and dialects, religious beliefs and ritual practices, forms and patterns of marriage, food habits, dress patterns and cultural traditions (Singh, 1992). Thirdly, this diversity is particularly striking at the regional level.

Secondly, the view that the minorities and other ethnic groups should assimilate themselves in the national mainstream implies that hitherto they have been leading a secluded life, that they are insulated and isolated from the larger Indian society. This view is fallacious, dangerous and untenable. It is fallacious because it perpetuates the colonial myth that Indian society is fragmentary, static and atomized. It is dangerous because it maligns and demonizes the minorities and other marginalized communities. It is untenable because it is premised on

a distortion and misrepresentation of facts. Thirdly, the assimilationist ideology is at variance with the democratic ethos of our time as well as with the secular-democratic spirit of the constitution of India.

There have existed, since ancient times, extensive linkages and networks in Indian society which have knit the various groups, communities and segments together. These linkages and networks are historically-embedded and continue to exist in contemporary Indian society with remarkable tenacity. This has been forcefully brought out in the People of India Project carried out by the Anthropological Survey of India. Most communities and social groups are located within the cultural-linguistic region where they share material culture, social space, regional ethos and identity, languages and dialects, and customs. All social groups and communities are closely intertwined in respect of subsistence and economic pursuits, adaptation to the environment and utilization of local resources. The extent of linkages between the various religious communities, including the majority Hindu population, is truly remarkable. Thus, according to the People of India Project, Hindus share a very high percentage of traits with Muslims (96.77 percent), Buddhists (91.19 percent), and Sikhs (88.99 percent). Likewise, the extent of shared material traits between Muslims and Sikhs is 89.95 percent and between Muslims and Buddhists 91.18 percent (Singh, 1992). Muslims share genetic and morphological traits with the Hindu population. There is a great deal of convergence between Hindus and Muslims in respect of kinship organization, marriage customs, local languages and dialects and regional identity. In fact, village identity often cuts across and transcends religious distinctions.

National Identity and National Integration

One can identify four distinct models of national integration in post-Independence India.

(A) The Composite Culture Model

(This model is based on the idea of unity-in-diversity, peaceful co-existence, reconciliation and co-operation between Hindus and Muslims in particular and among the various religious communities and ethnic groups in general. The idea of composite culture as the bedrock of Indian nationalism was strongly endorsed by Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru.)

(B) The Assimilationist Model

(This model is founded on Hindu nationalism and the assimilation of minority communities, tribals and other groups into the orbit of Hindu society and culture.)

(C) The Secularist Model

(Espoused by the Westernised Indian elite, this model emphasizes political parameters such as citizenship, secularism, federalism and fundamental rights as providing the edifice of nationalism. This model disregards the role of religion and ethnicity in public life.)

(D) *The Pluralist/ Multicultural Model*

(It argues that India is essentially a plural and multicultural society. Therefore, Indian nationalism should be founded on the tolerance and appreciation of ethnic diversity, peaceful co-existence and respect for human and community rights, especially minority rights.)

The constitution of India enshrines several elements and features from (A), (C) and (D). It envisages a pluralistic polity through the conceptual instruments of secularism and federalism. Although the constitution does not contain the word secularism in its Preamble, it pervades its spirit and the whole gamut of its provisions. In the Indian context, secularism is essentially a matter of state policy towards religion and is marked by three features: (i) equal citizenship and equality before law as well as equal legal protection to all citizens (Article 14), (ii) guarantee of freedom of religion to individuals and groups (Article 19 (1) (a)), (iii) the State's equal distance vis-à-vis various religions in the sense that it cannot discriminate in favour of or against any religion of the country. The constitution also promotes regional pluralism by providing for a federal government (Articles 370,371). The constitution guarantees religious and cultural freedom to all citizens, which includes freedom of conscience, freedom to practice and propagate religion, freedom to the minorities to preserve their religion, culture, language and script and to establish their own educational institutions (Sathe, 1992).

The assimilationist model is out of tune with the spirit of our times and at variance with the universally acknowledged tenets of democratic pluralism and human rights as well as with the composite ethos of Indian society. Therefore, it deserves to be discarded. While the idea of composite culture as the bedrock of Indian nationalism is largely based on historical and contemporary reality, it is rather simplistic and banal in its conventional formulation. It seems to highlight and focus only on one facet of Indian civilization, namely Hindu-Muslim exchanges and syncretism in architecture, music, arts and cultural patterns. The full reality, as I have tried to demonstrate in the opening part of this paper, is that the scale and magnitude of India's composite civilization is far more pervasive and extensive. Another problem with the idea of composite culture is that it tends to exaggerate the significance and impact of certain monistic-syncretistic trends in medieval Indian society, such as the cult of *Deen-e-Ilahi* patronized by Emperor Akbar, the metaphysical monism of Emperor Shah Jahan's son Dara Shikoh, and the mystic monism of Kabir. The cult of *Deen-e-Ilahi*, which was a bizarre hodge-podge of doctrines and rituals drawn from Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and Zoroastrianism, died with the Emperor's death. Kabir's critique of excessive formalism and ritualism on the part of Hindu priests and Muslim mullahs and his emphasis on a personal experience of the divine appealed to large masses of people, both Hindu and Muslim, in northern and western India. However, it failed to have any extensive and enduring impact on Indian society. Ironically, the Kabirpanthi sect split into Hindu and Muslim segments. Some secular-minded advocates of India's composite culture emphasize the positive role of such things as Hindu-Muslim inter-marriages, the organization of concerts by Muslim musicians in Hindu temples and the voluntary participation of Muslims in Hindu rituals and ceremonies in fostering national integration. However, such things are peripheral in nature

and are not endorsed by Hindus and Muslims in general. Yet another problem with the idea of composite culture is that it takes a rather facile view of India's past and glosses over areas of conflict and tension, especially between Hindus and Muslims. In recent years, the issue of India's past, particularly medieval history, has become a subject of contentious debate and acrimonious polemic. Colonial historiography has cast an ominous shadow over the interpretation of Indian history, particularly medieval history. Unfortunately, there seems to be a growing trend towards mixing mythology, particularly religious mythology, with history. J Carsten has considered the significance of 'forgetting' in the construction of identity, In a situation like ours, where much of the country's history is contested, certain historical episodes and narratives need to be subjected to the process of conscious and deliberate 'forgetting'. The need for the demystification and de-colonization of history is equally great and urgent.⁽²⁾

The secularist model, which endorses the idea of civic nationalism or what Jurgen Habermas has described as constitutional patriotism, has a great deal of merit in it, but as Craig Calhoun has rightly pointed out, nationalism is not merely a matter of politics but also of culture and identity (Calhoun,1997:3).

I wish to propose an alternative, or rather complementary, model of national identity and integration in India, which I would like to describe as the *multicommunitarian* model. This model is not wholly original but based on a reformulation or reconceptualization of certain features drawn from the afore-mentioned three models. It is guided by the distinguished American anthropologist Alfred Kroeber's perceptive observation, quoted in the opening part of this paper, that the essence of a civilization is not in its being but in its becoming. In other words, civilization is a dynamic, unfolding process. It is inspired by an acute observation of Jawaharlal Nehru to the effect that Indianness is a matter of feeling, a dream, a vision, and an emotion. Some scholars have spoken about the conscious 'invention' of national traditions and their role in the construction of national identity (Hobsbawm and Ranger,1983). The multicommunitarian model presented here is premised on a 'reinvention', rather than 'invention' , of national identity in the context of India.

The multicommunitarian model outlined in this paper is informed and guided by three broad premises.

- (1) The national identity of a plural and multicultural society, such as India, should be inclusive rather than exclusive, open-ended and fluid rather than closed and rigid, dynamic and evolving rather than fixed and static, pluralistic and syncretistic rather than homogeneous and undifferentiated, tolerant and accommodating rather than totalitarian and tyrannical. It should be based on democratic consensus rather than on coercion (Momin,1994; Momin,1999; Parekh,2000). Like individuals, ethnic groups and cultural communities in plural societies have multiple identities which are often over-lapping and complementary (Sen,2001). The definition and construction of national identity in a plural society should allow sufficient autonomous spaces for the existence of these identities.

- (2) The definition and construction of national identity in a plural society should be guided and inspired by a set of value-premises, including appreciation and tolerance of diversity, peaceful co-existence in a democratic framework, respect for human and community rights, especially minority rights, and adherence to the principle of reconciliation through dialogue and other legitimate methods of conflict resolution.
- (3) A theory or model of national integration should not only be logically coherent and conceptually elegant but should also have a historical and empirical referent. In other words, a viable model of national integration should reflect both the historical reality of a given society as well as its contemporary situation. It should steer clear of being too idealistic, elitist or abstract.

The multicomunitarian model of national identity and integration in the context of India is characterized by the following features.

- (A) Extensive cultural and ethnic diversity not only exists across the country but is also endemic to the Hindu ethos, social organization and cultural traditions. This diversity is a valuable and inalienable part of Indian civilization and hence deserves to be preserved and maintained. Therefore, an ungrudging appreciation and tolerance of cultural and ethnic diversity is a sine qua non of national identity in India. Contrary to the misconception prevalent in certain quarters, diversity need not be a stumbling block in the path of national unity and integration. As Bhikhu Parekh has rightly observed, political unity does not require cultural homogeneity and is best preserved in a climate of flourishing and self-confident cultural diversities (Parekh,1997).
- (B) India symbolises a veritable human and civilizational laboratory where the process of cross-breeding of ideas, beliefs, doctrines, social institutions and cultural traditions has been going on for the past five thousand years. As a result of this process, Indian civilization has been enriched, nourished and sustained by several cultural streams and ethnic groups. The rich and multi-faceted contributions of various social groups and ethnic communities, including the minorities, tribals and indigenous communities, to the shaping of Indian civilization, in the past as well as in the post-Independence period, should be openly and generously acknowledged. The protracted process of cultural interaction and exchange in Indian society has given rise to extensive linkages and networks between regions, social groups and communities. These linkages and networks are historically embedded and have a powerful resonance in the contemporary setting as well. These linkages and networks, shared memories and experiences of the anti-colonial struggle, shared traits, social and cultural spaces, linguistic and regional identities, and shared literary and artistic expressions are the greatest strengths and assets of Indian civilization. They should inspire and guide national identity, national integration and national aspirations.

The idea that India's composite cultural heritage should inform and guide its national identity does not necessarily entail a blurring, collapse or dilution of ethnic boundaries and religious identities. It is desirable, in my opinion, for Hindus and

Muslims as well as other social groups and ethnic communities to preserve and maintain their respective religious and ethnic identities and to respect the boundaries within which these identities are embedded. At the same time, the creative strength and potential of their shared identities should be underscored and harnessed in the service of national integration (Momin,2001).

- (C) It is gratifying that the constitution of India takes due cognizance of the country's pluralistic ethos and allows its various ethnic groups and cultural and religious minorities autonomous spaces. The multicomunitarian model, therefore, can be worked out and implemented within the broad framework of the Indian constitution.

Notes

- (1) The Indo-Islamic tradition also encompasses the religious sphere in some measure. In Bengal and Orissa, the commonly used word for consecrated food (*prasad*) in Hindu rituals and ceremonies is *shirini*, which is of Persian origin and which has a similar connotation in the Muslim usage. Similarly, the Persian word *Pir*, which refers to a spiritual mentor, is occasionally used in the Hindu religious context. One comes across, for example, names like *Ramev Pir*.
- (2) The policies and actions of Muslim emperors and kings during the medieval period, which were often motivated by political considerations, are increasingly being communalized by certain right-wing historians. Thus, while stray acts of desecration of Hindu temples by some Muslim rulers are exaggerated and misrepresented, such acts by Hindu rulers against Buddhist and Jain temples are glossed over. In the early medieval period, there were violent confrontations between Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Shaivites and Vaishnavites (Subramanyam,1996). Much before the Muslim conquest of India, Hindu rulers some times destroyed Buddhist temples. King Harshdev of Kashmir, for example, destroyed and plundered Hindu temples. The Parmar king Shubhatvaram destroyed Jain temples in Gujarat. Buddhist shrines and temples were systematically destroyed by the Shaivites from the 6th to the 10th century. Shankara, the ruler of Bengal, dismantled the famous Buddhist temple at Bodh Gaya and built a Hindu temple on its ruins. Jain temples were destroyed by Hindu rulers in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka between the 7th and 11th century.

An unfortunate consequence of the communalization of history is that acts of benevolence and magnanimity on the part of Muslim emperors and kings are being overlooked. King Zainul Abideen of Kashmir (1421-1471) undertook the repair of temples which had become dilapidated or which had been destroyed by the earlier Muslim rulers. He gave the freedom to those who had been forcibly converted by his father to revert to their original faith.

References

- Ahmad, Aziz (1964): *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment* (Oxford: Clarendon Press)
- Basham, A.L. (1958): *The Indian Subcontinent in Historical Perspective* (London)
- Bhandarkar, R.G. (1913): *Vaishnavism, Saivism and Minor Religious Systems* (Straussburg)
- Bharati, A. (1965): *The Tantric Tradition* (London)
- Bhattacharyya, N.N. (1998): *Encyclopaedia of Ancient Indian Culture* (New Delhi: Manohar)
- Bose, N.K. (1967): *Society and Culture in India* (Bombay)
- Burrow, T. (1965): *The Sanskrit Language* (London)
- Calhoun, Craig (1997): *Nationalism* (Buckingham: Open University Press)
- Chattopadhyaya, K.C. (1978): *Studies in Vedic and Indo-Iranian Religion and Literature* (Varanasi)
- Dasgupta, S. (1962): *Obscure Religious Cults* (Calcutta)
- Deshpande, Madhav M. (1997), 'Vedic Aryans, non-Vedic Aryans and non-Aryans: Judging the linguistic evidence of the Veda' in George Erdosy, *ed.* *The Indo-Aryans in Ancient South Asia: Language, Material Culture and Ethnicity* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal)
- Gonda, J. (1976): *Vishnuism and Saivism: A Comparison* (New Delhi)
- Habib, Irfan (1994): *Reason and History* (New Delhi: Zakir Husain College)
- Hobsbawm, E. and T.Ranger, *eds.* (1983): *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)
- Hark, J.C. (1968): *The Art and Architecture of the Indian Subcontinent* (London)
- Jairajbhoy, R.A. (1963): *Foreign Influence in Ancient India* (Bombay)
- Joshi, P.M. (1975): *Studies in the Foreign Relations of India* (Hyderabad)
- Khan, Yusuf Husain (): *Glimpses of Medieval Indian Culture* (Delhi)
- Kosambi, D.D. (1987): *The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India* (Delhi)
- Kroeber, A. L. (1972); *Anthropology* (Calcutta: Oxford and IBH)

- Misra, S.C. (1974) 'Indigenization and Islamization in Indian History' *Secular Democracy*
- Momin, A. R. (1977) 'The Indo-Islamic Tradition' *Sociological Bulletin*, 26(2), pp.242-258
 (1991) "Colonialism, Ethnicity and the Nationalist Discourse in 19th Century Maharashtra", Mahatma Jotirao Phule Endowment Lecture delivered at the University of Madras.
 (1994) 'Cultural Pluralism, National Identity and Development--The Indian Case' in B.N.Saraswati, *ed.* Interface of Identity and Development (Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts)
 (1996) 'The Legacy of G. S. Ghurye: A Centennial Festschrift (Bombay: Popular Prakashan)
 (1998) 'The Impact of the Conquest of Istanbul on the Indian Subcontinent' Paper presented at the 3rd International Conference on the Conquest of Istanbul held in Istanbul, Turkey on May 23-24,1998
 (1999) Islam and the Promotion of Knowledge (Delhi: Institute of Objective Studies)
 (2001) 'The Management of Ethnic Conflict in Plural Societies' *Indian Journal of Federal Studies*
- Parekh, Bhikhu (1997) "Managing Multicultural Societies" Convocation Address, University of Delhi (April 16, 1997)
 (2000) Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory (London: Macmillan)
- Possehl, G. ed. (1982): Harappan Civilization (New Delhi)
- Prasad, Rajendra (1946): India Divided (Bombay)
- Ragavan, V. (1980): The Ramayana Tradition in Asia (New Delhi)
- Sathe, S. P. (1992)'Nehru and Federalism: Vision and Prospects' in Rajiv Dhavan and Thomas Pant eds. Nehru and the Constitution (New Delhi: Indian Law Institute)
- Sen, Amartya (2001) 'What is the idea of India?' *The Indian Express* (March4,2001)
- Sharma, R.S. (1958): Sudras in Ancient India (Delhi)
 (1994): Looking for the Aryans (Cennai: Orient)
 (1999): Advent of the Aryans in India (Delhi: Manohar)
- Sharma, S.R. (1954): The Crescent in India (Bombay)
- Sherwani, H.K. (1968): Cultural Trends in Medieval India (Bombay)

Shivapadasundaram, S. (1934): *The Saiva School of Hinduism* (London)

Singh, K. S. (1992) *People of India: An Introduction* (Calcutta: Anthropological Survey of India)

(2000) "Diversity, Heterogeneity and Integration An Ideological Perspective" in Indian Council of Social Science Research: *We lived together* (Delhi: ICSSR)

Sircar, D.C. (1965): *Select Inscriptions, Vol. I* (Calcutta)

Subramanyam, S. (1996), " Before the Leviathan: Sectarian violence and the state in precolonial India" in Kaushik Basu and Sanjay Subramanyam, *eds.* *Unravelling the Nation, Sectarian Conflict and India's Secular Identity* (New Delhi: Penguin Books)

Tara Chand (1936): *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture* (Allahabad)

Thapar, Romila (1985): *Ancient Indian Social History: Some Interpretations* (Delhi:Orient Longman)

(1985): *Ancient Indian Social History: Some Interpretations* (New Delhi)

Trautmann, Thomas R. (1979), 'The Study of Dravidian Kinship' in M.M.Deshpande and P.E.Hook, *eds.* *Aryan and Non-Aryan in India* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press)

Walker, Benjamin (1963): *Hindu world* (London)

Wink, Andre (1990): *Al-Hind:The Making of the Indo-Islamic World* (Delhi: Oxford University Press)

Woodroffe, John (1951): *Shakti and Shakta* (Madras)

Mawlana Rum on Human Nature

Professor A.R. Momin

One may discern, in the history of human thought, three distinct and contrasting views on human nature: (i) a benign or romantic view, according to which human nature is seen as inherently good, (ii) a cynical or negative view, which equates human nature with evil and viciousness, (iii) a neutral view, which holds that there is no such thing as original human nature and that it is wholly or largely a product of historical and social conditions. In the fifth century BC, Socrates held that no man voluntarily pursues evil, because it is not embedded in human nature. Chinese philosophy espouses a benign view of human nature. The eminent historian of ideas Arthur Lovejoy has observed that a pessimistic and cynical attitude towards man and his destiny has been the dominant strain throughout the greater part of history. In Western Christianity, St. Augustine developed the doctrine of original sin and held that all men are by birth tainted by sin.



Schopenhauer (d. 1860) developed a highly pessimistic and cynical view of man. He regarded man as an evil animal who differs from other animals only in his greater viciousness. The philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche (d. 1900) contains extreme contempt and hatred for man. Reinhold Niebuhr (d. 1971) spoke of evil as being in the centre of human personality. The predominant conception of man in the natural as well as social and behavioural sciences is reductionistic and deterministic. The celebrated biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy has aptly described this view as the robot model of man. This model is still endorsed by a good many scientists. Thus, Francis Crick, who along with two other scientists, won the 1962 Nobel Prize for deciphering the genetic code, said a few years ago: "You, your joys and your sorrows, your memories and your ambitions, your sense of personal identity and free will, are in fact no more than the behaviour of a vast assembly of nerve cells".

The romantic as well as the cynical views of human nature present at best a partial and therefore one-sided and distorted picture of the human condition. A major limitation of the romantic view of human nature is that it offers no satisfactory or realistic explanation for the universal existence of evil and viciousness in human society. The cynical and deterministic view of man, on the other hand, fails to take cognisance of the salience of human agency.

The Islamic view of man offers a balanced and realistic picture of human nature and eschews the reductionism and distortion inherent in the romantic and cynical views. The Islamic perspective on human nature is marked by four distinct characteristics. In the first place, Islam offers an ennobling view of human nature. Man, according to the Islamic view, has been created in the best of moulds and given dominion over all that is in the universe. Man is not the product of a blind process of evolution, but a being created by God with a

purpose. All humans are born innocent, untainted by originalism or guilt. All men have descended from Adam, the primordial man, and are therefore equal in His sight. The equality and brotherhood of mankind is one of the cardinal principles of the Islamic faith. Man has been designated as God's vicegerent on earth. Thus Islam portrays man as possessing infinite possibilities of being and becoming.

Secondly, human nature is characterised by a certain duality or polarity. On the one hand, man has been created from clay, a lowly substance (Quran 23:12; 32:7). On the other hand, God has breathed His soul into him (Quran 15:29). Thus, man possesses two rather contradictory potentialities: sublime and divine-like, on the one hand, and base and demonic, on the other (Quran 95:4-5). Man tends to be impatient and greedy (Quran 70:19). Furthermore, he has a tendency to be ungrateful, niggardly and contentious. He is prone to acting in an unjust manner and often surrenders to his desires (Quran 45:23). The dual nature of man is illustrated in the story of Abel and Cain (Quran 5:23-31).

Thirdly, Islam eschews a deterministic view of the human condition. It takes due cognisance of human agency and emphasizes that man has been endowed with self-consciousness, the capacity for reasoning and discernment, and moral choice. Man has the freedom to choose between good and evil (Quran 8:53; 13:11; 15:29). The Quran says: "We did indeed offer the trust (*amanah*) to the heavens and the earth and the mountains but, being afraid, they refused to take it up; but man took it up... (Quran 33:72). The commentators of the Quran point out that the word "trust" (*amanah*) refers to man's capacity for reasoning, self-reflection and moral choice.

Fourthly, Islam recognises the role of the social environment and education in unfolding, as well as stifling, human potentialities. The Prophet is reported to have said: "There is not a new born who is not born in a state of nature. His parents make him a Jew, a Christian or a Magian". He also said: "A man follows the ways of his friend. Therefore you should be watchful about the person you befriend". The Islamic view of human nature is not confined to an explication of its nature and dynamics; Islam also suggests a normative framework and an ethical code to facilitate the flowering of man's benign potentialities and to check and control the destructive, harmful tendencies in his nature.

It can readily be appreciated that the Islamic perspective on human nature is eminently reasonable, realistic and balanced and avoids the pitfalls of the romantic as well as cynical views. Interestingly, one can find an echo of the Islamic view of human nature in the observation of an eminent French philosopher Blaise Pascal (d. 1662): "It is dangerous to show man too clearly how much he resembles the beast without at the same time showing him his greatness. It is also dangerous to allow him too clear a vision of his greatness without his baseness. It is even more dangerous to leave him in ignorance of both. But it is very profitable to show him both."

The Sufis were greatly interested in understanding the complexities and intricacies of human nature and in unravelling its secrets. Imam al-Ghazali (d. 1111) pointed out that man possesses within himself qualities which are partly angelic, partly animal-like, and partly Satanic. He says that man has been described as a noble being because he has been endowed

with reason, through which he can recognise God and transcend his organismic limitations and frailties. Drawing on the Quranic view that good and evil are embedded in the structure of the human psyche, the Sufis make a distinction between the heart (*qalb*) and the lower, base self (*nafs*). The heart, according to them, is the mainspring of benign and angelic qualities, including compassion, sincerity, altruism, humility and selflessness. The self, on the other hand, is the locus and breeding ground of base qualities and traits, such as pride, jealousy, selfishness, deceit and hypocrisy. This distinction is basically derived from the Quran which describes the self as inciting man to evil (Quran 12:53), while it speaks of a 'sound heart' (Quran 26:89), and of a heart 'turned in devotion to God' (Quran 50:33). In Sufi literature, the self has been compared to a defiant and wayward woman who tries to seduce and cheat the poor wayfarer. Sometimes it is likened to a black dog, a disobedient camel, a restive horse or mule, a pig, a snake, and the Pharaoh.

Since the self is considered the locus of evil and wickedness, the Sufis underscore the need for rigorous and sustained efforts to resist its temptations and enticements. Overcoming one's organismic frailties and limitations – 'natural qualities' as the Sufis describe it—is regarded as the greater *jihad* or holy war. Qushayri (d. 1072) points out in his celebrated *Risalah* that defying the desires and temptations of the lower self (*nafs*) is the heart and soul of worship. Sahl al-Tustari (d. 896) says that one who has overpowered his lower self has gained mastery over the whole world. Abul Qasim Nasrabadi (d. 977) described the lower self as a prison and deliverance from it as eternal bliss and tranquillity.

The Sufis emphasise that though evil is programmed into the structure of the human psyche, it is possible and desirable to domesticate and contain it. They prescribe two complementary methods for this purpose: purging one's self of base and unworthy qualities—which they describe as *takhlīya* or emptying—and substituting them with by sublime and virtuous qualities, thereby adorning the psyche—described as *tablīya* or embellishment. This methodology is inspired by a Tradition of the Prophet: 'Qualify yourselves with the qualities of God'. Shaykh Shihabuddin Suharwardi (d. 1234) said that if someone gets into conflict with another, the latter should confront his adversary's lower self with his heart. Confronting someone's lower self (which is the breeding ground of base qualities) with one's heart (which is the mainspring of goodness and virtue) will bring an end to viciousness and aggression on the part of the enemy. On the other hand, if one were to confront someone's lower self with one's own lower self, there will be no end to viciousness and animosity.

Mawlana Jalaluddin Rumi's conception of human nature is notable on three counts. First, it is basically derived from Islamic sources, especially the Quran and the Traditions of the Prophet and is therefore in harmony with the Islamic perspective on man's nature. Secondly, there is a significant continuity and convergence between the views of classical Sufis on human nature and those of Mawlana Rum. Thirdly, he has described the dynamic and complexity of human nature and the elusive and enigmatic character of the human self through folklore, parables and metaphors, which even the man in the street could understand. The appeal and effect of the narrative is heightened further by the elegance and beauty of his poetic composition. This constitutes his greatest and unique contribution to the subject.

Dwelling on the ennobling view of human nature in the Islamic tradition, Mawlana Rum says that man is “the astrolabe of the qualities of highness”. In *Fibi ma fib*, he alludes to the polarity of human nature and says that man is caught between the angelic world and the human world. To quote him:

The situation of man is like this: they took the feathers of an angel and tied them to the tail of an ass, that haply the ass in the ray and society of an angel might become an angel.

He says in the *Mathnawi* that man is “a mixture of bee and serpent”.

Mawlana Rum believes in human freedom and man’s God-given capacity for moral choice. He sees no contradiction between God’s omnipotence and submission to His will on the one hand and man’s freedom on the other. This is illustrated with a fascinating anecdote mentioned in the *Mathnawi* and *Fib ma fib*. A man stealthily entered an apple garden with the intention to steal some fruits. When caught and questioned by the owner, he casually replied that it was in his destiny to steal the apples. When he received a sound thrashing from the owner he came to his senses and admitted that it was not God’s decree but his own evil intention which made him commit this act.

The Prophet is reported to have said, “This world is the seedbed of the Hereafter”. Mawlana Rum emphasises that every good deed will have its reward in this world as well as in the Hereafter. Similarly, every evil deed will bring about adverse consequences for the actor by way of punishment. He illustrates this fundamental truth by a simple example, saying:

When you plant colocinths you cannot reap sugarcane.

Mawlana Rum dwells a great deal on the follies, temptations and deceptions of the lower self (*nafs*). He compares it to an uncouth rustic who comes into the bazaar, makes loud, unpleasant noises and makes a nuisance of himself. The Mawlana employs evocative metaphors, similes and symbols to describe the wickedness of the lower self. Some Sufis describe the lower self as “greater idol”. Drawing on this simile, he says:

Your (lower) self is the mother of all idols,
For they are (lie) serpent and this one is like a python.

He takes the simile further and says:

The idol is (like) black water hidden in a jar
Consider the (lower) self as a stream of this black water

Pride and conceit is one of the distinct components of the lower self which according to the Islamic tradition, brought about the fall of Iblis or Satan. Alluding to this episode, the Mawlana says:

Satan’s disease was ‘I am superior’,
This disease exists in the lower self of every being.

Mawlana Rum, like the Sufis in general, is not content with describing the deceit and guile of the lower self. He urges its domestication and purification through constant vigilance, education, sustained effort, hardships, and companionship with the sages. In the first volume of the *Mathnawi* Mawlana Rum alludes to a Tradition of the Prophet wherein he remarked, after returning from an expedition, that we have come back from a smaller holy war (with the enemies of Islam) to a greater holy war (with the lower self). The Mawlana then comments:

Consider it easy to be a lion that tears asunder line of people,
The real lion is one who breaks his own lower self,
So that he may become God's lion with His help,
And delivered from his (lower) self and its Pharaoh.

At another place he asks, rhetorically: what is beheading? And replies: slaying the carnal self in the holy war.

Mawlana Rum greatly emphasises the psychological and spiritual benefits accruing from the company of saints and sages. Thus he says:

If you happen to be sandstone and marble,
You will become a pearl if you take to the company of sages.
A little time spent in the company of men of God,
is better than a hundred years' sincere worship.
The companionship of noble people will make you noble,
That of the wicked will make you wicked.

The Sufis point out that the experience of suffering and hardships is one of the most potent means for cleansing the lower self and the purification of the heart. Shaiq of Balkh (d. 790) spoke of the alchemy of hunger. Junaid of Baghdad (d. 906) is reported to have said: "We did not imbibe the principles of Sufism from discourses and talks, but from hunger and renunciation of the world and from giving up things to which we were accustomed and which we found desirable". Mawlana Rum offers a perceptive and insightful expatiation on the role of suffering and privations in self-purification through a number of highly suggestive metaphors and similes. He points out that everything reaches completion and fruition through pain and suffering. The nutshell has to be broken so that the precious oil can be extracted from it. Similarly, the shell of the oyster has to be split in order to obtain the pearl. Raw hide has to be subjected to a painful process of tanning and scrubbing before it is transformed into fine leather. The field has to be cut and dug up so that seeds could be planted in it, and the grain has to be crushed by the millstone so that it could be made into flour, from which bread is to be made. In the same way, he says, the lower self has to undergo a process of cleansing through suffering and hardships before it can partake of divine grace.

The Sufis point out that the lower self tries to beguile and seduce people in a variety of subtle and devious ways. It may for example seduce the novice who fancies that he has

already traversed the mystic path. Mawlana Rum cautions people to be aware of its ruses. He says:

The *nafs* has a rosary and a copy of the Quran in the right hand,
And a dagger and a sword in the sleeve.

The domestication and purification of man's lower self does not require asceticism, world-renunciation or self-mortification. What is important is to be aware of its deceptions and to subjugate it while carrying on with one's worldly obligations. In other words, the essence of spiritual life is to remain constantly in the presence of God, as it were, amidst worldly preoccupations and concerns. Echoing this view, Mawlana Rum says:

What is the world? It is (essentially) being oblivious of God,
And not worldly provisions, silver, children and wife.

Mawlana Rum believes that the key to eternal bliss lies in divine love. Some of his most eloquent verses deal with this theme. Thus he says:

Cheer to you! O obsessive love of mine!
O who is the healer of all my ills!
O who is the cure for my pride and vanity,
O who is my Plato and my Gallen!

Mawlana Rum's *Mathnawi* has provided spiritual nourishment, inspiration and guidance to generations of readers and listeners across large parts of the Islamic world during the past eight centuries. Its continued appeal and fascination lies in the fact that it effectively portrays the reality of the human condition and offers a time-tested panacea for the ills of the human psyche through highly evocative metaphors, similes and parables which can be understood and appreciated by all and sundry. Undoubtedly, Mawlana Rum has been, and will continue to remain, one of the best and most popular interpreters and spokesmen of the Islamic ethos in general and of Sufism in particular.

ⁱ R. Zapata-Barrero, *El turno de los inmigrantes: esferas de justicia y políticas de acomodación* (Imsero, Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad, 2002).

ⁱⁱ B. Parekh, *Rethinking multiculturalism* (London: MacMillan, 2000). For information on the process of multiculturalism in Spain see R. Zapata-Barrero, *Multiculturalidad e inmigración* (Madrid: ed. Síntesis, 2004) and R. Zapata-Barrero, *Inmigración, innovación política y cultura de acomodación en España* (Barcelona: Cidob/Bellaterra, 2004).

ⁱⁱⁱ G. Martín Muñoz, *Marroquíes en España. Estudio sobre su integración* (Madrid: Fundación Repsol YPF, 2003), p. 38.

^{iv} T. Todorov, *Les morales de l'histoire* (Paris: Grasset, le Collège de Philosophie, 1991).

^v R. Zapata-Barrero, *Multiculturalidad e inmigración* (Madrid: Editorial Síntesis, 2004), pp. 260-262.

^{vi} For additional information on populist rhetoric see, among the most recent works: P. Taggard *Populism* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000); P. Perrinau *Les croisés de la société fermée* (Paris: Editons l'Aube, 2001); Y. Meny and Y. Surel *Par le peuple, pour le peuple. Le populisme et les démocraties* (Paris: Fayard, 2000); O. Ihl, J. Chêne, E. Vial and G. Waterlot *Le populism au coeur de l'Europe* (Paris: La Découverte, 2003); P. A. Taguieff *Le retour du populism* (Paris: Universalis, 2004); E. Laclau *La razón populista*, (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2005).

^{vii} K. Friedrich, *Tradition and Authority* (London: Macmillan, 1972), p. 18.

^{viii} A. O. Hirschman, *The Rhetoric of Persuasion* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 9.

^{ix} E. Burke, *Reflections on the revolution in France* (London : Collier Macmillan, 1987).

^x El Ejido is a market-gardening town in the province of Almeria (Andalusia) in the southeast of Spain where violent riots took place against Moroccan workers. See R. Zapata-Barrero, "The 'discovery' of immigration in Spain: the politicization of immigration in the case of El Ejido", *Journal of International migration and integration*, Vol. 4, (2003), pp. 523-539.

^{xi} *Anuario de Extranjería 2004*, Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales, Secretaria de Estado de inmigración y emigración (December 2005).
http://extranjeros.mtas.es/es/general/DatosEstadisticos_index.html.

^{xii} J. de Lucas, "Algunas propuestas para comenzar a hablar en serio de política de inmigración," in J. de Lucas and F. Torres (eds.) *Inmigrantes: ¿cómo los tenemos?* (Madrid: Talasa Ediciones, 2002) pp. 23-48.

^{xiii} G. Martín Muñoz, "Prólogo" of the Spanish version of P. Balta *El islam* (Madrid: Salvat-Le Monde, 1996), pp. 9-16.

^{xiv} R. Zapata-Barrero, "The Muslim community and Spanish tradition: Maurophobia as a fact, and impartiality as a desideratum" in T. Modood, A. Triandafyllidou y R. Zapata-Barrero (eds.) *Multiculturalism, Muslims and Citizenship: a European approach* (London: Routledge, 2005), cap. 8, pp. 143-161.

^{xv} *Ibid.*, p. 14.

^{xvi} E. Martín Corrales (2002), *La Imagen del magrebí en España una perspectiva histórica, siglos XVI-XX* Barcelona: Bellaterra.

^{xvii} G. Martín Muñoz "El islam en España hoy", in L. Martín Rojo, C. Gómez Esteban, F. Arranz and A. Gabilondo (eds.) *Hablar y dejar hablar (sobre racismo y xenofobia)* (Madrid: Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 1994), p. 24.

^{xviii} B. López García (2003) "El islam y la integración de la inmigración en España", webislam.com, no. 212 [<http://www.webislam.com>]

^{xix} L. González Antón, *España y las Españas* (Madrid: Alianza, 1997), p.613.

^{xx} J. Vila Selma, "Hispanidad", *Enciclopedia de la Cultura Española* (Madrid: Editora Nacional, vol. 3, 1966), p. 551.

^{xxi} M. García Morente, *Idea de Hispanidad* (Buenos Aires: Espasa Calpe, 1938).

^{xxii} M. Carbayo Abengózar, "La Hispanidad: un acercamiento deconstructivo" in *Revista de estudios literarios*, no. 10, 1998.